MARY PONSONBY

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SIR HENRY AND LADY PONSONBY, ABOUT 1880.

MARY PONSONBY

A MEMOIR, SOME LETTERS
AND A JOURNAL

EDITED BY HER DAUGHTER
MAGDALEN PONSONBY

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FOREWORD

In this memoir there is no attempt to give a picture of Court Life in the early 'fifties or at any other period of Queen Victoria's reign. These pages will more than serve their purpose if they succeed in giving an impression of a great lady whose originality and character impressed themselves on those with whom she came in contact in singularly varied surroundings.

Apart from the biographical introduction, which contains a brief appreciation of her life, it will be left to the more or less disconnected extracts from the letters and journals to reveal her qualities and interests.

M. P.

November, 1926.

MARY ELIZABETH PONSONBY

1832—1916

Daughter of JOHN CROCKER BULTEEL (of Flete in the County of Devon) and LADY ELIZABETH GREY (Daughter of Charles Earl Grey, K.G.).

Appointed Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria on March 17th, 1853.

Resigned this appointment on her marriage to Henry Frederick Ponsonby, in April, 1861.

Appointed Extra Woman of the Bedchamber, 1895.

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Mary Elizabeth Bulteel was the eldest of the three daughters of John and Lady Elizabeth Bulteel, who also had two sons. She was born in 1832, the year that her grandfather Lord Grey's Reform Bill was passed. Towards the end of her life, when she was keenly interested in the newly-founded Labour Party, she liked to remember that she had seen her grandfather put on his Order of the Garter before going down to the House of Lords, thus feeling herself to be, as it were, a unique link between the old régime and the very modern.

Her father, John Crocker Bulteel, who died when she was still young, was not only the old-fashioned type of squire and Master of Foxhounds, but also an appreciative artist as well as an excellent craftsman: the smell of wood-shavings was among her earliest recollections and one of which she often spoke when she was working in her own carpenter's shop in the Moat Garden at Windsor.

Her mother, Lady Elizabeth Grey, came from a family that certainly did not lack vitality: their energy and spirit of contradiction were almost proverbial. Herself a good musician and artist she encouraged her daughter to care for music and painting, not as accomplishments but as a constant occupation and resource.

The family was brought up in Devonshire, and

throughout their lives the children retained their affection for the West Country: even when she was well over eighty Mary Ponsonby motored up to London in order to hear her favourite Devonshire songs sung by Plunket Greene.

After Mr. Bulteel's death, their home at Flete was sold and Lady Elizabeth and her three daughters came to London. It was a new kind of life for them. Fresh vistas opened out to their very intelligent minds, and it was then that Mary Bulteel got her first impetus towards her varied knowledge of French literature from attending French classes given by Monsieur Roche. To the end of her life she took great delight in French books and plays; while the French nation always had a charm and attraction for her.

Mainly through the fondness of her family for music and their frequent musical evenings in Eaton Place, they had the advantage of a very interesting circle of friends. Mario, Grisi and Mrs. Sartoris (Adelaide Kemble) were among those who used to invite Mary Bulteel to sing with them. This real love of music continued all through her life, and one of her greatest friends in later years was Miss Ethel Smyth, the composer, who seems, by all accounts, to have discussed the whole universe with her, though unfortunately no correspondence between the two seems to have been preserved. Mary Bulteel's talent for music and her appreciation can be judged by the fact that owing to the excellence of her comments on the "Monday Pops" (the Classical Concerts at St. James's Hall in the 'eighties) she was popularly credited with being the musical critic for *The Times*. There may have been a basis of truth in this, as it is more than

likely that *The Times* critic, knowing where to find intelligent appreciation, managed to exchange ideas with her during the interval.

The lives of the three Miss Bulteels were spent in anything but a groove, with the result that they were absolutely free from self-consciousness. London life, which they thoroughly enjoyed, was varied by visits to the country. They were often at Woburn, where the Duke of Bedford entertained the leading lights of the Peelite Party. It was on one of these visits that she made great friends with Mrs. Pauline Craven (*née* de la Ferronaye), a brilliant woman of the world and an ardent Roman Catholic, who spent most of her time in writing novels. This friendship may have been the origin of Mary Bulteel's deep interest in the Roman Church and her sincere admiration for Newman, to whose writings she devoted much serious study.

There were also frequent visits to Nuneham, where Lady Waldegrave could be relied upon to collect some of the most interesting political personalities of that day. Here she first met Sir William Harcourt, with whom she had a life-long friendship. In a letter to her in 1867, he says:

"You are still too gay, too intelligent and too unchanged from what you were to want either spirit or wit. Like most women, you are too impatient of the illogicality of facts and the imperfections of men."

They had, therefore, every opportunity of forming friendships in very varied walks of life, and were also encouraged to develop endless resources in themselves. They were blessed with an innate sense of humour which stood them in

good stead throughout their lives and helped them through many difficult times.

During these years, Mary Bulteel found in her religion a satisfying background to the very full life she was living. At the time of her Confirmation, Samuel Wilberforce (Bishop of Oxford) had made a very great impression on her mind. Her faith was very real to her and found expression in what was then considered the extreme High Church outlook. No impression of her life in London would be complete without recording that, however late she might have been at a ball, she was invariably to be found at the early service the following morning at St. Barnabas's, Pimlico.

When she was twenty, she went to visit her uncle, General Grey, who was Queen Victoria's private secretary and lived with his family at Norman Tower, Windsor Castle. During that visit, having the reputation of being an extremely good actress, she was invited to see the royal children's private theatricals. Her aunt, Lady Caroline Barrington, who was Lady-in-Waiting and general supervisor of the Royal Schoolroom and Nurseries, presented her to the Queen, who apparently took an immediate fancy to her, and in 1853 appointed her one of her Maids of Honour. This did not interrupt her mode of life, as the waiting was usually divided into periods of one month, four times a year.

At this date, no less than now, there were two very definite and distinct sides to Court life: on the one hand, the interesting historical element and the possibility of meeting all the prominent people of the day; and on the other, the punctilious Court etiquette fashioned more or less on the German lines. Most of the Ladies-in-Waiting

welcomed the newcomer as a refreshing addition to their number, although some of the old-fashioned ones must have been startled by her originality and mildly alarmed at her independence. Queen Victoria's choice of a new Maid of Honour was apparently guided less by the fact that she was the niece of her private secretary than that she was decidedly unlike the usual type of courtier. The Queen was deeply interested in any one who cared for acting and music; and when these tastes were combined with an absolutely fearless character it appealed to her imagination, which was always a guiding factor in her appreciation of people. There was a real friendship between these two, which lasted till the Queen's death. They attracted each other, not because they were alike, but because they were startlingly unlike. In spite of her shrewdness, Queen Victoria had little literary or artistic taste; whereas her Maid of Honour was even then living ahead of her time, and her natural as well as cultivated instincts for the best in Art and Literature made her judgment a very valuable one. They met, however, on the ground that they were both extremely genuine, and, thanks to their large-heartedness, they both possessed that simple humility without which no one can be great.

Owing to her power of adapting herself to her surroundings Mary Bulteel was really able to enjoy her Court life, although it afforded a marked contrast to any of her previous experiences. Of the daughters of Queen Victoria, the Empress Frederick was certainly her greatest friend: her very fine brain and keen intellect found a worthy and sympathetic companion in the new Maid of Honour. Of their later relationship, the selection

from the Empress Frederick's letters will give a reasonably complete picture.

In April, 1861, Mary Bulteel married Henry Frederick Ponsonby, who was equerry to the Prince Consort and Colonel in the Grenadier Guards. Having been A.D.C. to three Lords-Lieutenant in Ireland, he had considerable experience of Court life before he came to Windsor. After they were married they went to live at No. 6, The Cloisters, Windsor, which they took for a term of years; but with the death of the Prince Consort their plans for the future were all altered.

In 1862, owing to the Alabama incident, there appeared to be danger of trouble with the United States, and the Guards were sent to Canada as a precautionary measure. Colonel and Mrs. Ponsonby accordingly had to leave their house in the Cloisters and departed for Canada, leaving behind them their first baby, then a few months old.

Mrs. Ponsonby's love of adventure and power of making the best of things stood her in good stead and turned what might have been a time of exile into a period of happy experiences. Whether cooking an omelette, training a choir, sleighing, or learning to skate, everything was entered into in a spirit that ensured her getting the maximum of enjoyment out of it. She always seemed to be renewing her youth, and even when she was an old lady she had lost none of that zest in life which, as a rule, is only associated with young people.

They returned to England in 1864, and not being called upon, as they feared, to go out again to Canada, they settled down once more with the house in the Cloisters as their headquarters. In 1870 General Grey died and Colonel Ponsonby

succeeded him as private secretary to Queen Victoria. This meant moving their home to Norman Tower. Here their family of five were brought up, their mother playing the principal part in their education. From the very earliest age she taught them to have resources in themselves, and made the development of their characters her chief aim, irrespective of the part they might be called upon to play in life: a favourite saying of hers was that if people allow themselves to be bored they end by being bores themselves.

In the Moat Garden at Norman Tower a carpenter's shop was started where the children learnt various handicrafts. Governesses came and went, but it was from their mother that they learnt that there was such a thing as the Art of Life.

During the 'seventies, she had a great deal to do with the organisation of lectures and classes given in Windsor by the Eton masters. These were a source of delight to the girls of that day, who would otherwise have only received the dreary discipline of lessons of the type that has been immortalised by the classic example of Dr. Brewer's *Guide to Science.*

Norman Tower with its Moat Garden and old prison rooms was never really looked on as an official residence; thanks to their mother, who had a positive genius for making a house happy and comfortable, it was to the Ponsonbys the embodiment of a home. The Windsor life was varied by a few excursions to London and occasional visits to Devonshire and Scotland, and though her life at this time was not very eventful, her interest in the politics of the country and in the current thought of the day never flagged.

Politically she held strong Liberal views, but was, on the whole, bored with Gladstone's strenuousness and lack of humour, and much preferred sitting at dinner near Disraeli, whose light but histrionic touch amused her intensely. She loved controversies and arguments, whether they were political, religious, or scientific: a real battle of wits was to her like a breath of fresh air and satisfied her innate sporting instinct and love of adventure. Her catholic tastes found expression in the different kind of friends which she made. From the 'seventies dates her friendship with George Eliot; she had a boundless admiration for her genius and came very much under the influence of her clean, cold agnosticism; but her sense of humour was keenly alive to the slightly "precious" and reverential attitude of mind of the "faithful" who surrounded the authoress. Perhaps her two greatest friends were Lady Canning and Lady Jocelyn, who had been "in waiting" with her. It was to Lady Canning that she confided before marriage her wish to make her life really useful by joining some Anglican religious community, an ambition which, perhaps happily, was never fulfilled. Her desire, however, to be of service found expression after marriage in working for the cause of women: much of her energy was devoted to procuring wider spheres of employment for working women and to the development of higher education for those who were not manual workers.

Girton College was started in 1863–64. Miss Emily Davies and Mrs. Ponsonby were two of the most hard-working members of the original committee at a time when the College consisted of only a small house at Hitchin. It would cause little excitement in the present day if a new

women's college were to be opened, but in the middle of last century it was a real event, and people who aided and abetted that sort of scheme were looked upon as "strong-minded"—an epithet much in vogue at that time though it never seems to have been carefully defined.

In 1874, about the time when the first Trade Union for women was formed, a society for the better employment of women was inaugurated by some keen social reformers of the day. Mrs. Ponsonby was one of the most active members of the committee and regularly went up to London for its meetings. It is difficult to realise the change in the status of women that has been effected in fifty years, but it must be remembered that at that date practically the only openings for women as wage-earners were teaching, domestic service, and work in the big mills and factories, which was almost slavery. The committee referred to above was one of the first bodies to work towards securing for them better and more varied employment, and the results of such efforts can be seen in the conditions of the present day.

During the years spent at Windsor, Mrs. Ponsonby was able to keep in touch with many old friends, and at the Deanery and elsewhere she met some of the prominent Churchmen of the day such as Dean Stanley, Liddon, and Canon Hugh Pearson. She had several acquaintances among Eton masters, but her special friends were the Vice-Provost (Mr. Cornish) and his wife; also Mr. A. C. Benson, the late Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. In a letter to a friend written some time after her death, Mr. Benson says:

"I do wish something could be written about

Sir Henry and Lady Ponsonby. I always thought that he had more natural charm and gentleness of touch than almost any one I ever met. I don't mean that one didn't see that he had decisiveness and courage and I dare say even sternness in the background. He could no doubt both dislike and despise, but he had that perfect and equal courtesy to every one which gives more happiness to a circle than almost anything; and you know what I thought of Lady Ponsonby. Her intense and critical perception which could easily have hurt if it had not been kept in check by her warm-heartedness, power of affection, and sense of justice."

In 1878, on the death of Sir Thomas Biddulph, Keeper of the Privy Purse, Colonel Ponsonby was appointed in his place though still retaining his office as the Queen's private secretary. His family were given rooms in St. James's Palace, which again brought Mrs. Ponsonby into closer touch with the many worlds in which she took such a vivid interest. Spending some months of each year in London, she naturally revived her musical associations, particularly at Sir Frederick Leighton's studio, where many of the old friends of Eaton Place came together. Her days were more full than ever with her home life and her ever-widening interests and occupations, out of all of which she got the keenest enjoyment. It was her eternal youth that made her such a wonderful companion and brought out the best in everything as if by accident: her younger friends invariably thought she was the same age as themselves. In the widest sense of the term she was a really religious woman, not merely

during her High Church phase or during her attraction to the Roman Catholic Church, but also when she became a disciple of George Eliot and Herbert Spencer. This underlying trait perhaps found its deepest root in a sense of the necessity of service as an expression of her love of life. She was a mystic and a Christian, though on a basis wider than that of any particular denomination. Her devotion to Pascal was uninterrupted from her earliest days down to her last. His attraction for her can best be summarised in a sentence from an article she wrote on him for the *Nineteenth Century*.

"He seems impelled by the blending of contradictions in his character to drive through all obstacles to the very heart of the problem. These contradictions include the gift of scientific observation and reasoning, yet with a penetrating sense of things pertaining to heart and soul."

So, too, with her: she never lost the sense of "things pertaining to heart and soul"; they were always paramount with her.

In 1895 Henry Frederick Ponsonby died. The Norman Tower home was broken up and the family settled at Ascot. It was difficult to make a fresh start, but her boundless courage made it possible for her to get outside herself and spend the remainder of her life happily in these new surroundings.

During the years spent at Windsor, Mrs. Ponsonby used her leisure as a time for a very varied and extensive reading. She had a great power of concentration, and there is no doubt that her systematic study of philosophy had much to do

in forming her very clear and concise powers of reasoning. She came very much under the influence of John Stuart Mill and his advocacy of complete emancipation from every form of superstition, but he had no abiding influence with her, as can be seen in an article which she wrote in 1896 in which she says:

"Let the puzzled, the ignorant, those who fail in conduct and those who cannot follow and grasp the apparent conviction of the great ones in the intellectual world, deal gently with themselves. Let these limited ones, owning humbly their limitations, have their moments of joy in dreams when they have done their small day's work; let them look into the far blue and rejoice that all is not known, even to the wise and prudent."

Her dislike of interrupting her reading, however, did not in any way prevent her keeping in touch with her old friends or making new ones among her neighbours, though she had little patience with the ordinary type of afternoon call with the weather as its main topic of conversation. New interests seemed to crop up wherever she went, no new developments of life were allowed to pass by unnoticed; even after she was eighty she became so interested in aviation that she was most anxious to go in an aeroplane. She died in 1916 at Ascot, where she had lived for twenty-one years.

Words seem singularly inadequate to give even a sketch of her character. There was something that completely defies expression in the things which made her so limitlessly kind, and

gave her courage till the last day of her life to seize what was good in everybody and everything and make it her own, and then give it back to others enriched and transformed by her personality.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	Foreword	v
	Biographical Introduction	vii
I.	A Maid of Honour (1853–1861)	1
II.	Married Life	44
III.	George Eliot	89
IV.	A Visit to Germany	105
V.	1876–1895	121
VI.	Some Correspondents, 1895–1916	195
VII.	Family Letters	226
VIII.	The Empress Frederick	241
IX.	Epilogue	292
	Index	295

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Sir Henry and Lady Ponsonby, about 1880 *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

The Queen and the Prince Consort, about 1853 . 2

The Prison Room, Norman Tower, Windsor Castle 72

The Queen, with Arthur Ponsonby as Page, about 1882 158

Sir Henry Ponsonby, 1883 164

The Emperor Frederick when Crown Prince, 1887 242

The Empress Frederick, 1898 280

Lady Ponsonby at Ascot, about 1914 . . . 292

MARY PONSONBY

CHAPTER I

A MAID OF HONOUR (1853–1861)

THE story of the early days spent by Mary Elizabeth at Court is given in the form of extracts from a *Journal*, written by her at a later date, and from letters written to her family.

I was appointed Maid of Honour in 1853. I shared the fate of all fresh members of the household when they first arrived; much interest being taken in my doings by both Prince and Queen. The new broom was everything at first, and though I have been treated with constant kindness ever since, and also have had ups and downs of special favour and indifference, yet nothing has come up to my first year of waiting in the pleasure which my service and companionship seemed to give. The eight years I spent with the Queen were happy as far as regards my relations with her; there grew up in my mind a steady and deep affection for her which time only increased and which I hope and believe will last for life.

Everything seems so different to read by the light of experience, that I find it almost impossible to look back without seeing the people and things of that day through the spectacles of the present.

For instance, there was an excitement and pleasurable mystery in the doubts in first arriving into waiting; was it likely I should see the Queen alone and get to know her well?

I became accustomed to see the door leading to the Queen's rooms shut silently behind the page who came backwards and forwards for orders, and I rather longed to get on the other side and see what her tastes and occupations were, and to get to know her opinions. I gradually found that people came in and out of waiting, and played exactly the same part, without getting to that personal knowledge of the Queen's character and feelings which would be so much more interesting than anything else. However, I became gradually better acquainted with her, and I think the idea that I formed of her character was a true one, for after eighteen years of study I find very little in my conception of her character to alter.

The Prince's opinion, for he had opinions which the Queen at that time could not be said to have, used to rouse up the most fierce antagonism in my mind, being in opposition as they were to all my favourite ecclesiastic doctrines. Even then I could not help admiring his quiet, strong, convinced, just way of looking at a question. He had a calm, philosophical way, intensely German, of weighing the pros and cons, of predicting what the effect of such and such a measure would be, of theorising on the abstract qualities and faults of a nation, and thence deducing what would be the right mode of dealing with each case; in short, his views of politics and history were very much more in accordance with the rational philosophical school of a later day, than with the form of opinion then current in

THE QUEEN AND THE PRINCE CONSORT, ABOUT 1853.

this country. It was common enough in *his* country and he imported it from Germany, but it made him unsatisfactory to our statesmen of the empirical and hand-to-mouth class, and was perhaps overrated by those who were unaccustomed to see any power of reasoning and generalising among princes. Looking carefully back and remembering his judgment on many points, I should say he was in ability on the level with a very intellectual German on the second line. He was without a spark of spontaneity, and this often made him put the commonest everyday occurrence into an abstract form, stating it as a proposition and treating it logically; whereas by the rapid application of common sense, lookers-on would arrive far nearer the truth in half the time. I have always thought the Queen possessed an instinct and a quick appreciation of people (without being able to reason about them) in a far more marked way than the Prince. But in more abstruse questions, her want of knowledge and her prejudices, when the conditions of the problem were not discernible at first sight, told against her.

The qualities of the Prince's character would place him, I think, on a far higher level than those of his mind. Unselfish, patient, kind-hearted, truthful and just, one felt it was possible to rely upon him as upon a strong rock. There was not a servant in the house that did not feel that if they were accused of any fault, the smallest circumstances of the case would be weighed without anger, without favour and with perfect justice. A great deal has been said about the steady and excellent manner with which the Prince conducted himself with women. I do not think he ever had a moment of rebellion against

the line prescribed for himself from the first, never to allow himself the least beginning of a flirtation. It is easy enough to say that he was a cold, unimpassioned man and therefore such a course was easy to him. It is pleasanter, however, to think it was his deliberate aim to behave in this way. That he was a happy man I very much doubt, for with all his love of dry formulas there was a strong vein of poetical feeling unexpressed even to himself. But it showed itself in his appreciation of music and his feeling of keen pain at the miseries of other lives, all of which one imagined to be discernible in the expression of his face, which at its best was sad and thoughtful. His manner was the least pleasing thing about him unless he was perfectly at his ease, and this rarely happened. There was a complete absence of that frankness which was such a charm in the Queen's manner, and there was also a self-consciousness which completely prevented one's recognition of being in the presence of a "Grand Seigneur." He gave one much more the idea of being an excellent tutor, and this was the cause of his being unpopular with those who judged entirely by his manner. The idle "Grand Seigneur" and the smart man of the world utterly failed to see his other merits. They could not shake off the feeling that they were speaking to a foreign (and your British Lord insists that the word is a kind of degradation) Professor.

To the women of the household he spoke but little, though with such a one as Lady Canning he would no doubt have liked to discuss society and politics; but he seemed to avoid or be bored with the general run of women. The men who liked him and engaged in the same pursuits,

enjoyed their rides and conversations with him and felt the blank in their Court existence terribly when he died. His way of treating the household was not very civil. He did not affect the interest in every one's remotest concerns which the Queen really felt and expressed. His way of giving orders and reproofs was rather too like a master of a house scolding servants to be pleasant for those who were bound to listen in silence. As for his sense of fun, which has been so much talked of in the journals, I never could discover it. He went into immoderate fits of laughter at anything like a practical joke; for instance, if any one caught his foot in a mat, or nearly fell into the fire or out of the window, the mirth of the whole Royal Family, headed by the Prince, knew no bounds. His original jokes were heavy and lumbering, like all German jokes I have ever known.

Lord Granville used to say that he never would tell his best stories to them, when pretending to pinch one's finger in the door would answer better. Lord Granville himself was amusing, witty, and quick as lightning, but he was too good a courtier to look as bored as he was when the Prince began to recite the whole of Mons. de la Jaunisse, or M. Crépin, without the pictures which are the only point. I do not think the Prince made a single great friend among the Ministers or even among the household. This might have been a good thing in itself, but somehow it was unpleasant in a man of his age to be able to keep to it; it implied something of the cold egotism which seems to chill you in all Royalties; and prevents you from forgetting the difference of position between them and their *entourage*. But it is as much insisted upon

by those around them, from the moment they are able to speak, as the common habits of ladies and gentlemen which become a second nature. A curious effect of this kind of reserve was, that whereas the relation of the Queen and the Prince to their household always had an element of stiffness in it, and you felt that they were pretty nearly indifferent as to which maid of honour, lady-in-waiting, or equerry did the work, they were on more natural terms with the servants. One result was that their standard of taste ran the risk of being vulgarised.

Old Stockmar was the only friend who was on terms of walking into the Prince's room whenever he felt inclined to spend an evening with them. He was a really clever wire-puller behind the scenes, and neither the Queen nor the Prince ever disputed his authority. He was a wizened-looking, grim old man with piercing brown eyes. He seldom roused himself to speak except with short epigrammatic sentences, and now and then, with a good-natured laugh and a bang upon the table, he would answer Uncle Charles's [General Grey] burst of keen Whig political talk with an incisive, destructive *résumé*, showing up, as he thought, the insufficiency of English method in political thought.

Of course a first arrival at Osborne could not be dull work for a girl of twenty-two, but I am surprised to think how little frightened I was. It was natural that the *mise en scène* amused me more at first than afterwards, when I thought the dinners insufferably dull.

I sat next Stockmar the first night. I can see his little brown eyes transfixing me with a shrewd look which I rather liked.

"Young lady, why do you crumble your

bread and never cease eating it? Take my advice and don't do that, or you will ruin your digestion."

"Very well," I said, "I will leave off."

"But do you always do what you are told in that obedient way?"

"I like to do as I am told (*grandly*), I like to obey."

"Very few people start their life with obedience."

I left off crumbling my bread quietly, and he gave me good marks. I was told that I was approved of.

I must try and remember what impression my colleagues made on me. I was rather odious in two opposite ways; coming straight as I did from Woburn, Wrest, and Ampthill, where we acted, danced, flirted, and enjoyed ourselves, I found the Court atmosphere exceedingly dull, and on the other hand I am sure I was rather superior and pompous. I advised my new friends to read Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, etc. Besides this priggishness, I made strenuous efforts to keep up a high standard of religious practice. I did not, however, make such a disagreeable impression as I might have done, for my colleagues were very kind, and having a decided turn for mimicry, I nearly fell into the opposite snare of becoming a Court buffoon.

As regards the household arrangements, it is sufficient to say that one lady-in-waiting and two maids of honour came into waiting together. The maids of honour naturally knew more of the ladies-in-waiting than of the other maids of honour, whom they only met when they were sometimes told off to take a stray waiting together. I often feel very grateful that the fact

of being in waiting caused me to have such wonderful, beautiful, and clever friends as Lady Jocelyn, Lady Canning, and later Lady Macdonald.

The first lady I had to deal with was, fortunately for me, Lady Mt. Edgcumbe, for I knew her very well, as she was our neighbour in Devonshire and often came to call on us at Flete. She was rather a gently formidable woman, with a slow, drawly voice which we all learnt to fear—but only if anything went wrong, or if her orders and wishes were disregarded. Usually she was very kind and good-natured; her large, sleepy brown eyes would wake up from indifference to enthusiasm where music was concerned. She was rather severe on English ballads and would say to Mama:

"Oh no, dear Lady Bessie, do let Mary learn those songs of Gluck from the Orphée." And she insisted on my doing so. One characteristic showed itself in a very original way when she was in waiting. At home she never kept an account of time. The dinner-bell would ring, a quarter of an hour—half an hour—would pass, and then the footman would appeal to her children. Would they remind her that dinner was ready? Her answer to the remonstrance was usually:

"I cannot come now till I have finished the Andante."

Always late, if not much too early, but never in time. When she was with the Queen everything gave way to her desire to please her. But even then she resisted getting up from the pianoforte before the end of her practice. She was quite as strict with H.M. as with me.

"Dear madam, you really must do that passage again; it is so impertinent to Mozart to libel it so."

Her children and her nieces were afraid of her, but she was very kind to me and I liked being in waiting with her.

Soon after my first waiting, orders came that I must be ready to go with the Queen and Prince to Ireland. The Prince of Wales and Prince Arthur came too, and added much to the cheerfulness in Ireland. I remember they were both neatly dressed in white duck trousers and jackets and they made a slide of all our black trunks which they proceeded to use, with the result that their trousers were black and they got into fresh disgrace as they kept the Queen waiting while they changed them. The reception at Holyhead was kind and homely; the Queen by refusing to be surrounded by soldiers and police made herself wildly popular. At the Ball at the Vice-Regal Lodge when the Queen left she told me to stay behind and amuse myself.

"So dull for you, Mary, to come upstairs, so go back, my dear, and dance as much as you like."

To her Mother

During her visit to Windsor before her appointment as Maid of Honour.

Here I am, safe and sound after last night, and very frightened I was, I assure you. Aunt C. [Lady Caroline Barrington] and I started at 8 o'clock and found in the green drawing-room, waiting for the Queen, Mr. Cardwell and Colonel Phipps. The door opened soon, and the Queen, the Duchess of Kent, Prince Albert, Prince Somebody (the Queen's half-brother, I don't know his name), and Princess Ada walked in, followed by Lord Charlemont, Miss Murray, Miss Kerr, Lord

C. Fitzroy, Colonel Seymour—the Master of the Household—Mr. Gibbs, and Lord Byron.

The Queen shook hands with Aunt Caroline and me, and immediately went in to dinner. I sat between Colonel Seymour and Lord Charles—both pleasant and agreeable.

After dinner we were all standing in a knot, the Royalties some way off, when the Queen came up to Aunt C., and said something I could not quite hear about me, but the last words to my horror were—"Oh, I am sure she will not mind—such a small party—and not nearly so formidable as acting at Woburn." She wanted me to sing!! Aunt C. made a very good excuse, said I knew nothing by heart; she came up to me and said—"Is that true, Miss Bulteel? I should like so much to hear you sing." I said—"I should be very glad to do as your Majesty wishes, but it is really true that I know nothing by heart. It is very stupid, Ma'am." "Oh!" she said, "never mind," and then we had an "immense" conversation. I had to describe all we did at Woburn, the extravaganza, and Hatty's singing, Lord W.'s acting, etc. She was most gracious, and put me quite at my ease.

To her Mother

An account of her kissing hands on her appointment.

1853.

It is over! and I am alive. I must begin from the beginning. This morning I went out with Emma. She left me at Lord de Grey's and came back for me a little before two. As I was

crossing the hall at Aunt Mary's [Lady Halifax], I saw a letter with a large envelope—tore open a royal seal—inside was a note from Aunt Caroline saying " the Queen wishes you to be ready in my room at a little before three to kiss hands." It was past two. I ate a mouthful of luncheon, rushed upstairs, clapped on my bonnet and cloak —my best bonnet was not come home and so I went in my straw. I think I really felt wonderfully composed and set off with Aunt Mary. I felt rather nervous when we drove inside the palace gates. Aunt Caroline was not in her room —we sat there some time. At last she came and summoned a red footman who was sent to one of the dressers to acquaint her Majesty that Miss Bulteel was in Lady C.'s room. Aunt Caroline after a short time went to announce my arrival herself. A red footman then came for me and we wandered through several corridors, maids and people peeping out to take a look at the new maid of honour. I was then shown into a little blue waiting-room where I arranged myself—took off my gloves. Aunt Caroline then came for me and I was ushered in. The Queen was sitting in the middle of the room with a work table near her—a charming sitting-room full of beautiful things. She came towards me—I made a low curtsey and kissed her hand—and she kissed me. Then she asked me when I came to town—who I had been staying with—how you were and where you were, and about Georgy and Emily *

* Her sisters, who afterwards became Mrs. Mildmay and Lady Revelstoke.

and if you had made up your mind to stay in Devonshire—and told me she was expecting to hear me sing and she hoped I had brought music to take to Osborne—*most* kind. I then made a low curtsey, backed out of the room, restrained my shrieks, cut nine pirouettes and remained in an indescribable state of collapse outside the door. Now I am sitting in the maid of honour's sitting-room—which is very comfortable—and my room is on one side and Miss Kerr's on the other. I must write to Georgy an account of the Ball last night, and so good-bye for to-day.

To her Brother

BUCKINGHAM PALACE,
1853.

Yesterday evening there was a Household Dinner—rather awful. Miss Kerr and I marched down, through brilliantly lighted marble halls and staircases, to a very nice drawing-room, where we found Colonel Biddulph, Lord Byron, Baron Stockmar, Colonel Mickley, Colonel Hood. Dinner was announced; Lord Byron took in Miss Kerr, Colonel Biddulph the Hon. Mary. I sat by him and Baron Stockmar, whom I had never seen close before, a shrewd, wizened-looking little old man, with piercing black eyes. Uncle Charles and Colonel Seymour walked in after a few minutes. A sumptuous dinner, with forty red footmen and pages, champagne, etc.

After dinner Miss Kerr and I went into the drawing-room which was full of wax candles—whist tables put out. After coffee we thought we

had better leave the gentlemen to their own devices, and went upstairs to our sitting-room. Uncle Henry [Lord Grey] was the quintessence of graciousness—asked tenderly after Mama—said he was truly glad to hear you were looking after the place, it was infinitely more profitable, healthy and pleasant than knocking about town, and he was delighted to think he himself was going to leave this dingy hole on Tuesday.

I am also very glad to be going to Osborne. I have no wish to begin a London life again.

Miss Kerr and I have two little red morocco writing-tables, with blotting-book, paper and ink-stand—facsimile opposite each other—two arm-chairs—a round table—two footstools—two pair of silver candlesticks—a sofa—two pieces of furniture, with red silk cabinets for books and work-boxes—a pianoforte—a nice window and a balcony. There is the picture of the sitting-room; the bedroom is most comfortable—the bed quite the essence of comfort, sheets like floss silk and heaps of hot water and tubs. Don't show my letters to anybody except Mama and G. and E. The discretion is extreme here.

I hope I shan't be sick going to Osborne in the steamer. I am going to write an order for the carriage this morning, if it clears, to go and see Aunt Mary, who I hear is unwell after the Ball, but I am afraid the weather is too bad—cold, foggy, rainy and wintry, and so it has been since I left Devonshire. Must also contrive to go to Chesterfield House to see Rachel [Russell], who came to see me the first day I arrived.

I am not a bit frightened now, and am wary and close with Kerr. My thoughtfulness, memorandums, and punctuality are most perfect. We had such a dear little breakfast this morning—we two—downstairs after chapel.

To her Brother

OSBORNE,
1853.

I am going to give you a full and particular account of my first dinner with the Queen, which took place last night. I had not seen her since the journey except about the garden in a dear little carriage with a small pony. We received our orders in the afternoon. Lady Mount-Edgcumbe was to go and see her then, and there would be only one dinner. Arrayed in my white silk gown—blue and silver cornflowers adorning my locks and wearing my maid-of-honour badge—I was ready at 8. I went to call for Lady Mount-Edgcumbe, who I thought would never be ready—the clock had struck eight, at which time dinner was supposed to be. First one pair of gloves was too dirty, and then she remembered she ought to have a shawl to go through the passages, with her cold—then the maid brought the wrong one—then her lace flounce was torn, had to get needle and thread to mend it—then half-way down the passage she tore her glove, and so we went back for the first pair. All this time I was like a ginger-beer bottle fizzing with impatience; however, we got off at last; down

the corridors—which looked lovely lighted up—all paved with coloured tiles and mosaics—and were in time. We waited about five minutes, and then they came—not in the room we were, but straight to the dining-room—(if you understand, there are two doors) and they went straight from the staircase to the dining-room, and we stood in the other doorway, curtseyed and followed. If I was Georgy I could draw the whole thing. I was most unfortunate in my neighbours—Colonel Wilde, as deaf as a post, and Baron Stockmar who is always turned inside out with heartburn at dinner, and looks green, wizened and oppressed by it—he says he has very bad health. I can see it is excessive heartburn at dinner, for at times he looks quite collapsed, and disappears like the Duke of Bedford in his waistcoat. I scarcely said a word at dinner. Towards the end of dinner Colonel Wilde and Uncle Charles tried to speak *sotto voce* to one another—I said low to Stockmar, "That will never do, they are both as deaf as posts." "Yes!" the Queen said across, "both!"

After dinner the Queen went into the drawing-room and sat on an ottoman, and we stood. Lady Mount-Edgcumbe and I talked about all sorts of things—Kitley, Orleans, Georgy, Emily, you—then Lady Mount-E. took a fit of coughing and left the room. I was alone with the Queen! "Orribel fate," said I, but so it must be. Then she inquired about Mama's knee—I thought it was such a good topic—I described the whole accident.

To her Mother

OSBORNE,
1854.

Lady Ely is good-nature itself, though her accompaniment is rather mediocre—no ear—so does not know when wrong basses are put down. I expect if the Queen makes her accompany them, which she will, she will go into fits. Fancy my audacity at offering to play "Marie Stuart" when the Queen was walking away from the pianoforte—and it did very well. I wish she would one day let me sing something I know, for I have sung nothing but strange things, and I can't propose to sing one of my own things, but I think she has got into the persuasion that I can't accompany them. I have taken the precaution of keeping the accompaniment of these in my own hands, and told Lady E. I could manage them perfectly.

Princess Ada is renowned for her playing, so we shall have her to-night to perform.

After we had received the old Duchess and Princess Ada, as we had no orders, we took a long walk—Uncle Charles and myself, and now tea is ready.

To her Brother

OSBORNE,
1854.

I must tell you we had very nearly an accident the other day in the carriage—private to the family—as on the slightest provocation inquiries are sent, and make the Queen furious.

We went out in a charabanc, which in the seat

in front held the Queen, Prince Albert, Prince Arthur; in the part behind, which is like a small brake, Lady Ely, Princess Alice and myself. Four white ponies (it was Monday, so they were very fresh). When we got a little way into the approach, the leaders began to jump, got off the road, and turned right round and looked at us. The carriage was backing; I didn't know where it was going, or what was going to happen, except that they were plunging and seemed all entangled together; soon they went on again, then bolted down a side road. The Queen said she really could not stand it any longer, and told them to take off the leaders—which they did, and we went on peaceably enough.

Princess Alice was rather obstreperous behind, and as I was resisting her whims, she said, "Really, Mary, don't you know you must do what I tell you?" Such little Royal airs!

The night before last the Queen sent me to know whether the tables had been made to go round in the Princess Royal's room; upon the answer "yes"—and that there was a table going round in the dressers' room—we actually all went up into the lady's maid's room, and there we practised and succeeded. Then the Prince came up, and he and the Queen with Lady Ely and I whirled round; then the table was brought downstairs—and really we have had nothing else. I believe it to be the unconscious pressure that each person gives it in one direction—when the table is well *ébranlé* by the vibration of the fingers, which sends it round.

The Queen was quite provoked by Uncle Charles' incredulity.

Last night the Queen told me to get the duets, the first time we had sung after the gentlemen were come out. When I came back, she had taken fright evidently, and said she thought it would disturb the whist party, and could I sing something alone—as if that would not disturb them quite as much. Just conceive anything so awful as a round table—with Royalties sitting around it—a whist table—Prince Consort and Uncle Charles at billiards—*a dead silence*—me quite alone at the end of the room, with a very resonant pianoforte, and nothing but my voice heard through the room. I sang "Hélas dans ma prison." The Queen approved very much, and sang "Marie Stuart" to my accompaniment, and a German duet to Lady Ely's. She is not in good voice—quite in love with "Marie Stuart" and is going to have it at her concert. I hear Maud of H. ain't asked to the concert which is a frightful bore.

Adieu, my dearest Jack. I believe Georgy was right about honours. Do burn my letters.

To her Mother

Royal Visit to France, August 1855.

Victoria & Albert. (En route for France.)

I have just a few moments, before I am forced to send away my oak box, to say our passage is most prosperous. We started this morning at

four, and we are to arrive at 1 o'clock. It is now about 11.30.

Aunt C. called for me yesterday morning at 12.30 to take me to see Lady Canning, who had been to Eaton Square the night before, and was so sorry not to find me there that Aunt C. thought of this plan—it was very kind of her.

I cannot write very steadily as there is a good deal of vibration. Lady Ely took me to the station, where we met Lord Clarendon, Lord Breadalbane, Lord Alfred Paget, and Lord Abercorn. We arrived at about six o'clock—the Queen not being yet on board. She soon arrived and we dined at 8. I find my clothes, for the evening yesterday and for the landing to-day, are just the thing. Lady E. is more utterly the reverse from what she ought to be on this occasion than anybody can possibly conceive. I mean, I see she is preparing to be foolishly cringing to all the little miseries of etiquette, as if they required so much thought; I quite long for somebody as the Queen's first lady with more natural dignity —being quite sure of never being in fault about manners, etc. Uncle Charles and I howled over it last night, and tried to impress upon her the necessity of representing properly what we were, and still being perfectly natural and easy—but it was in vain, quite. Lady Churchill is quite brilliant by her side, at all events a lady in every way, and would make a very good second to a better first.

I slept very tolerably considering the noise, but bitterly regretted not having brought a

pillow. My cabin is *on ne peut plus* comfortable, and the weather is so lovely that even Lord Clarendon is perfectly happy. He is so pleasant, and really so is Lord Abercorn, who is rather an ally of mine since we started. Uncle Charles is too nice. The Queen was very kind; I had a long talk with her last night. She pounced upon my bracelet this morning! Princess Royal is disporting on the deck, and I am supposed to be amusing her, but having letters to write, retired behind the paddle-box. It is a most glorious ship, fitted up in brass and mahogany like a huge toy. There is an increase of movement, and a smell of fish from the kitchen has penetrated into my cabin, so methinks I will again go and look after my fat little charge.

To her Mother

PARIS,
August, 1855.

I think when I last wrote I was just beginning to feel rather muzzy in my cabin, about 2 hours before our landing. I soon put myself to rights with a good luncheon and a glass of claret and then went on deck to witness our gradual approach to the landing-place at Boulogne. All sides of the hills were covered with troops, who of course all saluted as we approached. It was rather a long affair getting up close, and made us an hour later than we expected. Boulogne looked lovely, with the soldiers and the people and the banners. There was not a great deal of cheering, for they don't know how. People who know about it

said that it was much more than they usually do; certainly when the Emperor walked up the bridge and kissed the Queen's hand there was a great shout. We went to the station in carriages, and then began our long and dusty journey to Paris. I was very much amused seeing all the French Paysans at the different stations. At one place where there was a hill, the group of blouses and paysannes caps were uncommonly pretty. Now comes the magnificent part: and really it is impossible for imagination to conceive anything so gorgeously magnificent as the entry into Paris. In the first place, the Strasbourg Railway Station (very much like the Great Western) was fitted up and brilliantly lighted like a theatre, with thousands of magnificently dressed people. The floor of the platform was covered with thick crimson velvet, the same crimson velvet with a golden fringe was used for *portières* to those enormous arches. It would be foolish to give you more details; in fact I *cannot* and the *Illustrated* can. Suffice to say, the *coup d'œil* was something beyond, but not so fine as that of the whole Boulevard of Strasbourg (the new street), with 100,000 people, lines of troops, with gorgeous uniforms, and all the windows full of people.

On our arrival at the top of the stairs, we found a sort of glorified groom of the chambers who told us off to our different rooms. "La Marquise Ely et la Marquise Bulteel par içi." We were in rooms next to each other and Lady Churchill was next to the Queen. It happened that none of the luggage had arrived. Lady Ely

was in a terrible fuss, but Lady Churchill and I were privately delighted at the thoughts of having a little *diner fin* in our sitting-room and unpacking later in peace. Our Court had of course all been presented *en masse* on arrival. The Empress's ladies were Madame de la Bedoyère, Madame de Saulcy, and I think the Duchesse de Bassano was Mistress of the Robes. I was very much delighted with my own room, and the groom of the chambers explained to me that "Madame la Marquise n'a q'un pas à faire et elle se trouve dans son bain." It was charming, looking over the park at St. Cloud with the Zouaves coming by with their quick sharp steps, and picturesque uniforms. The next day, after we had had our *petit déjeuner* in our rooms, we were summoned down to the *Grand Déjeuner* at 12.30. I had been very extravagant at Madame Levelly's and got some very pretty new gowns for morning and evening. The Mistress of the Robes inquired, "C'est comme ça qu'on se met chez vous pour les ordinaires?" "Mais toujours," I answered. At *déjeuner* I sat next Lord Clarendon who was most amusing, and Le Vicomte Valsh, one of the Emperor's equerries, who later became rather tiresome, as he would look after me too much. Lord Clarendon was very rash; he would call Princess Mathilde and Plon Plon [Prince Jerome Bonaparte and his wife] the assassin and the cook—names that always stuck to them. Lady Ely lived in a terrible fuss all day, as she had to manage the milliners, lace-makers and in fact all the shops in general. Lady Churchill and I

settled that we would not on any account meddle with her. One day when I had just arranged to go out with Madame de la Bedoyère, I got a hurried message to say I must get ready at once to go and shop with the Queen and the Prince, who wished to make an expedition incognito. First we were presented with some ordinary-looking bonnets that came from the Magazin du Louvre, then a common fiacre came to the back door, and we got in. The Prince sat with his back to the horses and the Queen and I opposite. We drove straight to the Jardin des Plantes. The Queen took tremendous interest and delight in quite ordinary circumstances, such as the people having their food out of doors outside the cafés, or at a cutler's shop because the knives and scissors were arranged in a circle in the window.

"But this should also be done in England."

I tried to explain that it was done, only that she didn't see it. As we were driving back through the streets, some woman shouted out—"Celle-la ressemble bien à la Reine d'Angleterre." The Queen bridled, as she always has a *penchant* for being recognised when she was incognito. When she said, "They do not seem to know who I *am*," it was a sure sign that she was beginning to be bored. We returned safely to St. Cloud, the Queen with a distinct *soif de l'inconnu.*

To her Sister

PARIS,
August, 1855.

It is the excess of virtue to sit down at 2 o'clock in the morning to write letters after having been on my feet literally since 10.30 this morning. My feet are so swelled and tired that, as one of the French ladies says, if it were not for the *crispations-nerveuses* in the soles that make them walk of themselves they would drop off like cheese.

I have so much to say that in fact I cannot write any more because I should drop. To-day was lovely, but Lady Abercorn and I cried tears of admiration for the sun on the white buildings. You will see what we did in the newspaper, and my private adventures I must reserve.

The Queen called me across the room last night and presented me to the Empress, with whom I had a little confab. She is too beautiful, the profile perfect. Good night.

Conceive after three hours and a half walking in the Exhibition, after walking all over the Gardens at the Elysée with the Princess Royal while the Queen received the diplomatists—after driving about in a melting sun and glare all the rest of the time—after waiting during the repose time of an hour for orders—after a long and disputatious visit with Madame Rosa, a milliner—after a scrambling dressing—after a long dinner—after an hour's standing—after two hours' play—after a long drawing-room and *levée* at the end, if I have a right to say I am tired, but no headache, so fit for anything.

The *Journal* supplements the account given in the foregoing letters.

One of our first functions was the semi-state visit to Trianon, so that the Queen should see where Marie Antoinette lived. The Empress appeared in a beautiful gown of valenciennes lace, with one rose in her hair. I regret to say that the Queen was badly dressed on these occasions, in early Victorian gowns, with a *penchant* for a "lilac cravat" as she called it. But these were things that did not in the least signify, as her wonderful dignity, her manner of bowing to the crowd, and her want of all preoccupation were far more impressive than dear Empress Eugenie's manner, who, though she was very beautiful, could not help always worrying over trifles.

There were two balls during the visit to Paris. The one at the Hôtel de Ville was the Municipal one, and it was far more bourgeois than the one at Versailles. That ball, which took place at La Galérie des Glaces, was one of the finest sights I have ever seen. There was the usual procession, and then I personally became quite reckless, and gave myself up to dancing. The Emperor looked imperturbable all the evening standing near his throne, and the Empress looked lovely and seemed to receive everybody with most perfect manners. At the end of the evening there was a sudden burst of fireworks, and we all rushed to the windows and saw Windsor Castle outlined in the sky. This impressed both the French and the English enormously, and the Queen was unutterably pleased.

The Queen's attitude to the Emperor throughout the visit was extremely deferential, and at the same time she was very much flattered at his talking of the intimate politics of the two countries to her in a confidential manner. These intimate conversations made a friendship between her and the Emperor which astonished and puzzled the Ministers very much. I remember Lord Clarendon murmuring to himself, "What is she hatching?" and looking amused and rather satirical. He even spoke very unguardedly to me on the subject, and we wondered how "Pam" [Lord Palmerston] would care for this friendship. The Emperor's character was always rather a mystery to me. I remember hearing it said that when he was in London during the Chartist rows, he puzzled people by his detachment from anything personal or any allusions to his future. When, after the *coup d'état*, he ascended the throne, he took his place absolutely calmly.

Lord Cowley was the Ambassador in Paris at that time. He was a pleasant grave man, who allowed all the gossip and froth of the Embassy to pass unnoticed. Lady Cowley [Olivia de Ros] was perfect in her manner; she understood exactly what was to be done, and the way to do it, but no fuss or pomposity. I remember going to the Hunt with her at St. Germains; she was very anxious to furbish me up and make me look very smart. I suggested to her that I should copy the German fashion and stick my hair down with soap.

From Lady Canning

Wife of the Viceroy of India: a great friend, when they had been in waiting together on Queen Victoria. M. E. P. had written to her when meditating joining an Anglican Religious Community.

CALCUTTA,
March 8th, 1857.

I have let three mails pass without answering your letter, but I could not do it in a hurry, and once I had the Ansons here, and both the other times Lord Canning gave me letters to write, and I could not dwell entirely upon the great subject of your thoughts as I wished.

Your letter was full of other interesting things that I loved so much to hear, but I cannot write of those to-day and now there is nothing to prevent me from fully dwelling upon *the* project and I feel less and less able even to give you an opinion; far less a word like advice. The pros and cons are obviously the very ones that trouble you so very much and that you state so simply and justly, and I feel both so very strongly with you. One or two things more occur to me and I will mention them because in the utter impossibility of saying anything like advice, you will I know like to know the ideas that strike one. One sounds like a matter of mere detail that would only have to be thought of after the step was decided upon. But it is practically an important matter, it is this *where* to begin and who with? If you chanced to have a clergyman brother in a manufacturing town—or some obvious line very little out of the natural path of duties: you would have a

beginning to slip quietly into, and it would depend upon yourself how much more you could undertake afterwards and you could do almost anything after such a simple beginning, but I do not the least see how *you* can begin without making such a sensation as would mar your usefulness in a cruel degree. I know exactly all the outcry that would be raised and I think it does so much practical harm that it ought to be avoided if possible. Joining Miss Lellon for instance—I imagine you to be too independent to be quite the person to feel yourself well united to that sort of rule; and having begun in anything so nearly like convent life would hamper you so much afterwards that you could not perhaps do what you thought best elsewhere, for you would have a sort of stamp upon you, either as a partizan or else as the very opposite. My own opinion of your "powers" for doing good is very high indeed. There are so very few very good and zealous people who have very good sense and who are tolerant enough of others, and if you were aged *40* I think you would be the best possible head of any kind of concern —even at 35 you would do, but you are wretchedly young now though I quite believe you do not feel that disadvantage fully.

I do not think it would take you very long to prepare and practise and acquire experience and a great deal might be done very quietly without much alteration of your present way of life.

In the same way it seems to me that it would spare much misery putting off the wrench of

leaving your Mother to try and do at home all you possibly can in the way of preparation for active life when you are older, and by giving yourself more time you could see how and where you could do most real good. With health and so many qualities for influencing others, which I will not enumerate, and the wish of giving up all for the greatest of all motives, one could not counsel you to put your great project aside, but I am sure there can be no harm in recommending *patience*, for you might throw away all your powers of usefulness by taking a wrong step at first, to say nothing of the distress that any such step must inevitably cause in your home. Earnestly wishing to do the will of God and striving to be rightly guided to see it and to know it, patiently waiting till the opportunity simply and quietly arrives, cannot be wrong: and if circumstances arise that put the active duty out of the question the disappointment must be patiently borne. I think the time for usefulness *will* come if you look for it without going far out of your way. While you earnestly try and do your appointed duties and neglect no opportunity of widening and deepening them.

It seems very presumptuous of me to write you this kind of letter from this place where *dilettante* is far too good a name for my line, "Drone" would be truer much.

You say comfortable little words about influence. All I hope is that mine is not bad, but I am not very sure, such is my idle and luxurious life and dull conversation.

I must tell you about a hardworking woman of a kind you will be amused to hear me praise certainly *very highly*. The wife of an American Baptist missionary! There are a number of these in Burmah and the wives are as much missionaries as their husbands and the good they do is quite extraordinary. They began many years before our first Burmese war and their missions are still the only ones (we have only Chaplains as yet in Burmah). One of these women being here I sent for her and was charmed with her strong, matter-of fact, useful ways. She knows some of the dialects as well as English and goes about, always first to the women, and teaches them; men come and bring children to be taught, and even young men; and she has had often schools of nearly grown-up young savages. Her object now is to set up a girls' school and she will be helped by Government. But to hear how they tramp about, or sometimes on an elephant or in a boat or carried —and living in huts made of branches and nursing sick and healing wounds and begged and entreated to come to distant villages, it is most curious. The Karen native in Burmah is quite keen for conversion and teaching and they work to pay for schooling and teachers and preachers. It all struck me as very real and not at all like English missionary wives' doings. I know you like to hear of earnestness in all lines and will not be shocked at my praise of a Baptist. Amongst so many heathens one appreciates Christians in all shades.

My friend told me she was baptised at 11 and

from that age was determined to join a mission. She looks about 32 now. But to return to the subject of this letter.

I do not quite see that I suggest anything but *patience*. I should think if it were possible to help at home—in some kind of useful work besides school teaching, it would be a beginning, and (here is advice at last) pray try as far as possible and as long to avoid taking a " step " like leaving home to join any establishment, it would raise a storm, and after all you probably would not wholly like the concern into which you made the plunge, and your reputation for good sense would (very likely quite unjustly) suffer dreadfully and prevent you from doing half as much good afterwards.

With time and health and the same strong purpose, the opportunity of " doing something " is sure to arrive.

Miss Nightingale began at *34* in Harley Street and everybody thought she looked very young, and she is a *tall* woman. Kaiserswerth was her best education, the Pastor called her his best pupil, and she was there three months—it is the place on the Rhine for deaconesses—some day on a tour why not go and see it ? It is for sick and mad, and bad, and orphans and I forget how many other concerns and it provides all Germany with deaconesses for Hospitals and Prisons, &c., &c. Germans are especially suited to manage these things quietly and simply and their greatest ladies belong to this.

I must own to you that when I last wrote I took it into my head from the little word you

said about Miss Stanley that you had an inclination towards the Roman Church and I dreaded to hear it was this. I am *so* relieved to find that it is not so.

In many ways the direction and the beaten track may be easy to follow and there may be a false charm in the repose of giving up the pain and toil of using one's own poor weak judgment and relying on that of another, but with all the sad variances and conflicts in our distracted Church, we need not (it seems to me) feel impelled to think for an instant of leaving it, as long as the Prayer Book is left.

I hope you will write to me very often and about everything that interests you, for I am sure you do not know how much I care for all that comes near to you and fills your mind. I have very few friends, and I never take *engouements*, so you may believe me very fully when I say I always think of you as one of the best and most cared for of my friends. What a pleasure it would have been to have talked over all this, but I have not attempted to do more than write down in a desultory way a few of the ideas that came into my mind as I had your letter.

You must be a great happiness to your dear Mother and your sisters and the thought of them I am sure, as the great age of *25* draws near, will incline you to see some sense in my preaching *patience*.

What a very happy picture of your life you give me! (Pray send me one or two of your water-colour sketches.) . . .

I am ashamed of the length of this.

Good-bye, dearest Mary,

Ever yours af^ly^,

C. C.

P.S.—I will add a P.S. If you are not in waiting when the Queen is laid up do put somebody up to writing to me about her. Lady Caroline I am sure will kindly do so and I wish so much to hear. I have felt stupidly anxious about her.

To her Mother

OSBORNE,
1858.

Yesterday was a fearful day, but I have got heaps of books, and though Lady Ely is rather *banale*, the day does not seem long. She does not understand comfort, and would sit wretchedly with the door open, etc., if she was left alone. She lets me have my own way about furniture, so I have routed the pianoforte out from the wall, to sit with one's face towards the people, instead of one's back; put the sofa crooked, with the round table near it, instead of stiffly in the middle of the room; the armchair crookedly and comfortably near the fire. If P. A. [Prince Albert] says anything about the pianoforte I shall stop his mouth with a little bit of scientific theory about the properties stone walls have of absorbing sound.

I think of you every day when it grows dark, and I find myself rather like a parrot—shutting

the curtains and shutters (which they always leave open !), lighting all the wax candles, arranging the room, and poking the fire, and finally ringing for tea—which is the height of comfort.

To her Mother

1858.

I have just received your letter—a thousand thanks for it. I never dispute with Uncle Charles, and we get on capitally. Lady Mount Edgcumbe is too kind and charming, and it is such a comfort her accompaniments and duets. Last night we sang "Marie Stuart" and "Caller Herrin" and she gave me a batch of duets to look over. If I ever have to accompany them I shall die, such difficult German music. I shall sit up all night, when Lady Mt. E. goes, to study them.

Last night there was only one dinner—after the singing. The Queen and Lady Mount Edgcumbe played at whist against Prince Albert and myself, such a nice little rubber. The Queen is rather like Emily about wasting her cards, which sent Prince Albert into fits; the pointed attention I gave to my game made me play rather like Hoyle.

I am so very, very sorry Lady Mt. E. goes away on Tuesday. One dinner to-morrow night, and the night after. Lord Aberdeen comes to-morrow, Lord Clarendon Tuesday.

Congratulate V. most heartily for me for having got rid of his beard—his sisters will be

very angry. Tell him I have not seen anything here worth getting cuttings from; the only thing Lady Mount Edgcumbe and I admired is a Ceanothus, a rare one—growing out of doors, and makes a beautiful creeper, like a sapphire carpet.

To her Mother

Second Royal Visit to France.

OFF CHERBOURG,
August 4th, 5th, and 6th, 1858.

I continue my journal from Thursday morning. Did not sleep very sound Wednesday night from the noise and the hardness of my bed. We breakfasted at nine, in our yachting clothes, and remained on deck till 11, and then descended into our cabins to dress; Lady D. arranged altogether in Eugenie blue silk, bonnet, etc., to match; myself in grey and white bonnet, perfectly grievous to see the showers of spray we went through as we left the yacht for the *Fairy*, and again the *Fairy* for the shore, the water being rough even in the Harbour, and ruining our gowns.

The same saluting went on as before; the Emperor and Empress met the Queen on the steps of the pier, at the top of which carriages were waiting to receive us. The same carriages and livery as they had at St. Cloud. The soldiers and bugle call reminded me so much of Paris, that I could not believe it was not the same visit. Not much crowd or enthusiasm; the Princess D'—— in the carriage with us, extremely cross

and ill-tempered. We all got out at the Prefecture, and found there waiting for us first Madame Walewska, who was delighted to see us and very pretty; Madame de la Bedoyère, who fell into my arms; and Madame de Jourmel, whom I had not seen before, a very handsome Spanish young lady, a friend of the Empress's mother—and some men.

I sat at breakfast between Baraguay d'Hilliers * (I don't know how to spell his name) and Sir John Pakington. My Marshal was rather agreeable, and talked much of "la liberté est don inappréciable qu'on apprécie seulement après l'avoir perdu" — which speech, I thought, was odd for an Emperor's man! They say he (B. d'H.) hates the English. However, he was very favourable to English ladies after our *déjeuner*, as Lady Cowley told me I had made a conquest of him.

We had taken off our bonnets in the Princesse d'Erling's room, and Lady Cowley had shown us how to smooth our hair in the German fashion, without having either brush or comb, but merely sprinkling it with water—but when we wished to put on our bonnets again, thinking the Queen would be waiting for us, the old Princess would not allow us, saying it was very likely we should not be wanted to go, and that she alone would get ready; her rudeness made Madame Walewska quite hot, and thanks to Madame W. we insisted upon dressing, and were ready to go to the Fort.

The little open carriages were not favourable to cages, and old Erling looked the picture of

* Marshal of France. Served under Napoleon I.

sourness when I came in last, and smothered her petticoats. Somebody told me my gown was a new colour called *Araignée mourante d'amour*—and the old General in our carriage said they often *did* die when they were making up to the lady *araignée*, for the gentleman comes up and caresses her, at which she generally *croqués* him for his impertinence, and so goes on until one comes *qui lui plait alors cela va mieux, mais toujours au bout du compte elle en fait son déjeuner !*

They were all rather proud of their fortifications and works, and interested me very much. The men were not very civil to our gentlemen. We had with us Colonel Chapman, the head of the Engineers at Aldershot, to keep his eyes about him and see what was to be seen. He was supposed to be the Duke of C.'s gentleman, but the Emperor found him out directly: "That is an Engineer's uniform, I think"—"Do you know Aldershot?" etc., etc., and extracted from him that he directed the Engineers at A. and then smiled blandly.

We came back to the Prefecture rested—had our little talk with the Emperor and Empress—and then after visiting the Docks, went back to our ship. Lady D. and I tired and hot with the sun, and the constant scrambling, so we put on our dressing-gowns and had tea in her cabin, and rested till dressing time, then put on our smart clothes, and started for the *Bretagne* [the French Royal Yacht]. The saluting at sunset was magnificent, the setting sun lighting up the smoke, and giving a fiery look to the sea, quite beautiful to

behold. I think the Queen was a little nervous during the night, for a steamer would come right across us, and we had to back, and the swell the steamer made, and the noise altogether made her look a little shaky. The Emperor handed her out of the boat, into the second deck of the *Bretagne*, where all the crew with their muskets were arranged in tight rows, and shouted at the top of their voices.

The *Bretagne* was magnificently furnished with crimson silk, and filled with flowers, and dinner was laid on the second deck *à soixante couverts*—all the decorations being firearms—chandeliers of pistols, etc.—most capitally done. I sat between Lord Malmesbury and a French General. Lord M. was very much taken up with the Spaniard opposite, but was rather agreeable. I warned him about his dinner—not to forget his passage next day—but he was regardless, and so was very ill afterwards, as I predicted.

I studied the Emperor's face at dinner—such glassy, determined eyes, to my mind not the least a look of intellect, but of strongest iron will. Much taken with making up to Lady D.; it turns out to be an old affair. Everybody surprised Madame Walewska did not come; they suspect a row.

An Extract from the Journal

When we arrived at Cherbourg we went on board the *Grande Bretagne*. I started off with a disastrous accident; the ring of my crinoline caught in the rowlocks of the boat. I could

neither take it off nor throw it overboard; my only chance was to hold it firmly on each side. The officers of the yacht thought I was a *prim Miss Anglaise* because I refused to take their arm.

In the Emperor and Empress's suite there was a very handsome Spanish lady who one day informed Marshal Pelissier that she was in true Spanish fashion *tutta a la Vuestra disposicion*, and that, as a French officer said to me, was *pas peu de chose*. The day after our arrival we drove to the Château de Brique Bec; we were supposed to be incognito and it was well kept up. But the Queen had her usual *lubie* of fancying people recognised her and wouldn't acknowledge her; as a matter of fact nobody knew who she was, and the *custode* talked a lot about the stupidity of English people.

To her Mother

BALMORAL CASTLE,
1859.

A thousand thanks for your letter which I have just received. You really are very kind about writing and the others infamous.

I have been staying at Abergeldie for two nights with the Duchess of Kent—Lady Augusta Bruce—there, too most hospitable; although I think her a little affected and *manièrée*, she certainly is clever and agreeable.

Yesterday, for the first time since I have been here, I had a most desperate sick-headache. Well, they forgot to order the carriage to take me to Abergeldie, and when I arrived, like a fool I lay down on the bed for ten minutes, and so

kept the Duchess of Kent waiting when she was going to dinner. You may conceive that driving with four women in a coach, with every crevice closed, did not make me feel less sick, especially with my back to the horses, nor did going to see the labourers' dance in a hot room improve it. I thought I should have died with steaming meals poked under my nose at dinner every two minutes. The Queen wanted me to go and lie down in the Duchess of Wellington's room for a time, but I got better. She gave the Duchess such a lovely ring because she heard it was her birthday the day before. I wish I had told her something about mine, perhaps she would have done the same.

Don't encourage W. H.'s gossiping; it makes the Queen furious if she thinks anything is written about what goes on here.

I rather agree with Montfort about Mrs. Fortescue's beauty now, though she must have been very pretty. Lady Canning frightens me a little—much more important, because much more clever than Her Grace of Wellington. I have just been drinking tea with her in her room, which is a more formidable affair than dining with the Queen. I am sure she is delightful really, and I like people being difficult to know.

To her Sister

Visit to Coburg on the occasion of the death of the Duchess of Coburg, sister-in-law of Queen Victoria.

September, 1860.

Rather disappointed, dearest, to get my English post and no letters from you or Amo! Well, I

have not much time to write to-day, but I must scratch off a few lines as it seems a pity to let the messenger go without. I believe Mama sent you my last journal and I will go on from where I left off in my letter to her. The weather is perfectly delicious here—I am with all the doors and windows open as if in the dog days. It is lucky for me it *is* so, for this house, judging by the way it is built, must be unbearably cold in winter. We have great struggles for hot water every day and Ayling [the maid] is in a most abominable temper. I was obliged to tell her yesterday and this morning how ridiculous I thought her! Well, yesterday morning we—Lady Churchill, Comtesse Bruhl (a frightful woman), Count Furchtenstein (the German Royal 1st man), nice looking, like a short Lord Burgersh, rather a fine gentleman to the Coburgians, and another man whose name I know not—went up to see the great tower. It was a stiffish walk, for it is on the top of a high hill. Inside are all kinds of curious armour—Luther's Room and magnificent carving to be seen. The view is quite lovely, and I must say the country is altogether beautiful. When we got back we found we were not expected to "lunch" and so we ordered a bouillon, some biscuits, fruit and Rhine wine in our room. After luncheon we slipped out and explored the town with Uncle Charles and Col. Ponsonby and foraged to buy *soap*. The shopping is most amusing!

We complain of *our* evenings—I think they are stiffer here than with us—the effect the whole thing produces is as if we were living two hundred

years ago—all the chairs round the room as they were for Queen Mary at Holyrood (the only thing of the kind I have seen) and the common necessaries of life in some instances wanting, and the equerries and household in general are much more collapsed before these little sovereigns than we are before the Queen. The Princess Royal [who married Prince Frederick William of Prussia in 1858] told me last night (private) that she wished so for a walk sometimes at Berlin, where she is shut up from October to May, that she could not help sitting down to cry and wished she could walk up and down the walls. She begged me to come and pay her a visit—she said she was sure it could quite well be managed between my waitings and that we should be *so* comfortable! It is lucky that I have it not in my head to accept her invitation, for it would make her Prussian household frantically jealous if she was much with an Englishwoman. As it is they seem quite astonished if one appears to know anything about her. The little Prussian Prince [the ex-Kaiser Wilhelm] made his appearance before dinner, the Queen quite proud of her Grandson and showing him off. At 9.30 we came up to our rooms and Lady C. and I put on our dressing-gowns and ordered tea, but the rooms are very cheerless in the evenings without one armchair—and no carpets. This morning Lady C. and I had coffee in our rooms and then we all assembled (all the women but us in large black veils) in the Reception Room and then to Chapel—such a frightful Chapel—Louis XV ornamented ceiling with

badly painted medallions. At the East end a few steps, then a table with a Crucifix and two candles and *over* the top a large pulpit and *over* that the musicians. The service (Lutheran) was very like the Scotch—a great deal of very slow singing (*here* I must own beautifully done in parts like Cologne singers), all of us sitting—then a long sermon—then an extempore prayer. After which one of the men in black sitting near the Communion Table went *behind* it and intoned something and we finished with an Amen. The whole thing was dreary to me from being I think so undevotional, for one had not even an opportunity of saying one's prayers to oneself. The Queen looked absent and when she saw the others were crying (it was a funeral service) put on an impressioned face. She was worked up to desire us to get crêpe weepers to stick into our hair instead of frivolous black flowers. We have had to send for every kind of funeral garb—it really is very tiresome. Poor old woman! I wonder if at this moment she sees us all lamenting her death for such very odd reasons! Well, we had our slight repast at 12.30, and then, Lady C., and myself, Comtesse Bruhl, Furchtenstein and Hochwachter have been to Rosenau in a pony carriage and chestnuts. It is a *lovely* spot—but the house, oh so dreary and uncomfortable! What they must think of the *luxe* of our English country houses when they come to us I am at a loss to imagine.

CHAPTER II

MARRIED LIFE

Henry Frederick Ponsonby was the son of Sir Frederick and Lady Emily Ponsonby. The family were Irish, or as some call it, "Garrison Irish," having gone across in the time of Cromwell, and to this may be attributed Henry Ponsonby's lack of self-consciousness and total disregard of foolish conventionalities.

At the age of 17 he joined the 49th Regiment and was transferred two years later to the Grenadier Guards, but was soon appointed Aide-de-camp to his uncle Lord Bessborough, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. His tact and discretion were so much valued that he was chosen as Private Secretary to three successive Lords Lieutenant. In 1855, however, he relinquished his appointment in order to go out with his Regiment to the Crimea where "he comported himself excellently well." After the war he was appointed, at the age of 32, Equerry to the Prince Consort, though still remaining on the strength of his Regiment.

He was Equerry-in-Waiting during the Royal visit to Coburg for the funeral of the Duchess of Coburg, Mary Bulteel also being with the Court as maid of honour on that occasion. In April of the following year (1861) they were married and made their first home at the Cloisters at Windsor.

The death of the Prince Consort in the following December meant the severance for a time of his connection with the Court, and he returned as second-in-command to his Regiment. In the early part of the following year the Grenadier Guards were sent to Canada and the Ponsonbys were forced to leave their baby of six weeks old behind in the charge of her grandmother, Lady Elizabeth Bulteel.

The relations between England and America were at that time severely strained. The cause of the North was very unpopular, and even the Government was giving indirect help to the South by turning a blind eye to the purpose for which privateers—of which the *Alabama* was the most notorious—were being built in England. When, however, it became more obvious that the North were fighting against slavery and that it was not a war for dominion, popular opinion greatly changed and the danger of trouble, as a precaution against which the Guards had been sent out to Canada, passed away. Before twelve months had passed relations were sufficiently cordial for the Ponsonbys to be able to visit the States.

On their return from Canada in 1864, Colonel Ponsonby was appointed Equerry to Queen Victoria, and in 1870, on the death of General Grey, he became the Queen's Private Secretary, later holding in addition the post of Keeper of the Privy Purse.

From 1864–1870 the Ponsonbys were living at 6, The Cloisters, and in the latter year moved to Norman Tower. The movements of the Court necessitated Colonel Ponsonby being frequently away from home, but Queen Victoria's affectionate interest in his wife ensured her receiving frequent invitations to stay at Osborne and Balmoral.

During the periods when they were separated a daily correspondence was maintained: although portions of these letters are full of delightful descriptions of political and social events at the Court, they were mostly of a particularly intimate nature. In the position he held it was inevitable that confidential information on every event of importance should come to him; he was able, however, to give people the impression that he knew nothing, and if on occasions he appeared to be indiscreet it was safe to assume that "the news" he gave had already appeared somewhere in print.

The amount of correspondence alone that devolved on him was enormous, but he combined with his ability a tremendous power of concentration and hard work, and this was supplemented by an undying sense of humour which enabled him to see the ever-recurring Court perplexities and worries in their right perspective.

From Henry Ponsonby to his Mother-in-law

WINDSOR,
December 15, 1861.

You will have heard before you get this the terrible news of the Prince's death. General Grey, you may remember, thought badly of him the day you were here, and since that he appears to have grown gradually worse, but the doctors were not really alarmed I believe till Friday afternoon, from which time they seem to have given up all hope. He died at 11 o'clock last night, very peaceably. He had scarcely been conscious all the day, although in the morning he had recognised the P. of Wales. L. C. Phipps,

General Grey, General Bruce and Biddulph* took leave of him yesterday afternoon, but I don't believe he recognised them. The Queen has been in a fearful state—but is calmer and more composed now and says she will do her best to do her duty. I write this as Mary has gone to lie down till dinner time, she being rather tired with anxiety and going about yesterday to Norman Tower, and to Lady Caroline, etc. She will give you a better account of it than I can, but I have written as I thought you would like to hear a word from me by this post, and she will write to-morrow.

M. E. P. to her Mother

December, 1861.

I am sure you will be as full as everybody of this terrible misfortune—you know what I have always told you of the devotion of the poor Queen to her husband, and this frightful blow has left her in utter desolation ; she is wonderful, however, saying, "They need not be afraid, I will do my duty," and seems to have set before her as an object to do all he would have wished—but the utter consternation of everyone—the standstill everything has come to—the spring and centre of each being gone, is more apparent every moment. I cannot *conceive* what she will do, for if her will were ever so strong, she cannot have the power or capacity to do his work ; and for her *grief*, my very heart aches for "the poor Queen!" which are the only words people can

* Sir Thomas Biddulph, Keeper of the Privy Purse : usually referred to in the letters as B.

find to say, at first, though, the real sorrow felt by all was most touching, and shows what we all thought of the Prince.

I will write more to-morrow; so many people have written to ask me about the Q., and Lady Jocelyn and the Duchess of Atholl have been here for some time.

Extract from the Journal

In 1862 we went to Canada on account of the Alabama row. It was very stormy weather when we got on board the *Anglo-Saxon* at Liverpool. We had two good cabins, but the continual presence of the stewardess with hot sloppy tea made me so sick that I struggled on deck. When I got there a perfect storm was raging; I clung on to some rope or railing and hoped to face it, but I was just going to give it up when a man stopped me and said he was an American going back to his own country and would show me how to conquer sea-sickness. The first thing I had to do was to take his arm and walk up and down with the wind blowing straight at us; then he called the steward and ordered me a plate of beef and a glass of pale ale in the cabin, which he made me swallow, and said, "You will never be ill again." And I never was.

The first thing that surprised me was the sight of an iceberg when we were near Newfoundland. It seemed to me to be made of blue crystal and was quite one of the loveliest things I had ever seen. The Captain was in a great anxiety about keeping clear of it.

We went up the St. Lawrence river and arrived at Montreal. After the excitement of arriving was over, we went to look for a house, and found one in Union Street belonging to two English old maids. It was a clean, tidy and warm house; there were a few old-fashioned books about, such as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and a large Bible that had been presented to their niece on her wedding day and in it was written: "To . . . on her wedding day. Thou shalt not commit adultery."

While we were in Montreal my husband was second-in-command, Col. Stevenson commanding. The usual day I spent was to go in the morning to the Cathedral where there was an organist called Carter; he gave me organ, singing and harmony lessons. Three or four weeks after my arrival I was asked to sing in the Cathedral during the service, and had rather a *succès fou.* We used to sleigh most afternoons; we had a sleigh with a white horse that went by the name of Sir William Hamilton, because I was trying at that time to explain to my husband Sir William Hamilton's theory of perception. I thought he hadn't grasped it, but one day when the horse was suddenly intelligent on the way home he said, "Do let Sir William Hamilton have his perceptions." Once a week large sleighing parties went to La Chine to tea and each officer took his *muffin.* I was usually Lord Dunmore's *muffin;* and I had many pleasant drives, but like a *bon enfant* Alcibiades he was always trying to *épater* the public. Lord Abinger was the other smart man

in the Guards and had for his *muffin* Miss Magruda, whom he eventually married.

There were some French Canadians who were amusing, like Mademoiselle Rocheblave. She asked us to luncheon and we found her house full of old French traditions, and the china was beautiful old Sèvres. The English inhabitants were very tiresome, and when we went to call on them they always kept us waiting in the parlour while they dressed before they could receive us.

We left Montreal in August and went to Ottawa, going to various places *en route*. We joined the Hudson Bay Fur Company as I thought it would be very amusing to be the only woman in the party. Ottawa was a tremendous place for advertisement emblems in the street; you came across large boots, or a huge kettle, so that you had your choice before you began to shop. It was the first time in my life I heard the word "Stores" instead of shop.

When we arrived at the first station with the Hudson Bay Co., my husband said, "You had better take advantage of the pause to go down to the river and wash." So I went down while he arranged the room. When I came back I found that a screen had been erected which divided the room into two halves, and I could lie down and rest quite out of sight of the company. After I had been lying down for a short time I heard one of the Hudson Bay men say, "There is a gentleman here who has a remarkably sweet-toned voice when he speaks, I wonder if he can sing." To my astonishment H. said "Certainly," and struck up

an Irish song which was vociferously applauded. Towards daylight I had a little sleep, and then we started off the next day. One of the minor drawbacks of travelling in these obscure places was the very dirty ways you had to endure, such as, for instance, the waiter sitting next to you at luncheon and carefully wiping his knife and fork on the tablecloth beside you. When I first saw Niagara, quite apart from anything else, the roar of the water was so tremendous that I felt it would be impossible to sleep anywhere near it, but it was so rhythmical that it sent me to sleep like nothing else ever has. In fact some time after we left I slept badly from want of that soothing cadence.

Henry Ponsonby to his Mother-in-law

MONTREAL,
August 13*th*, 1862.

You will have got your letter from Mary before this, but I add a few words to hers to tell you she is getting on very well. I think the hot weather made her feel a little languid, and then she has had all the household arrangements and the usual bothers at first starting, besides which she superintends the cooking with a saucepan in her hand, and herself prepared a most excellent Devonshire dish of potatoes for my breakfast after the Field Day this morning, so no wonder she feels tired by the end of the day. Also we have what she calls *époumonéd* (I haven't an idea how to spell it) ourselves in returning the calls of the people here, and I think this is the most tiring of all.

To-night we dine with the Brigadier, Lord Frank Paulet, and to-morrow we are going away for ten days up the country. I feel Niagara to be a duty, so we shall go there—much against Mary's wish, who wants to go in a cart into the woods and live a savage life there, but as the woods are 100 miles off, and we have no preparations, we should get there and come back, and should probably starve, or live on bilberries. So I prefer the American hotel, with four meals a day. I have been in rude health, but unfortunately Mary unpacked your box of medicines, so nothing would please her but administering some of them to me. I have survived her first administrations and resolutely refused to take any more at present.

Our house is very nice, I think, and there is a pianoforte at which Mary plays and tries some intricate musical manœuvre she calls double bass, I believe. She has taken hold of an air that the Northerners sing:

"John Brown's body is lying in his grave,
But his soul is marching on.
Glory, Glory, Hallelujah.

"We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree,
And we'll keep marching on.
Glory, Glory, Hallelujah."

Our drums and fifes play it, and it makes a capital march.

I don't think the Hamilton friendship prospered—all very well, but I think Mary found there might be too much of a good thing. She likes Mrs. Higgins, who is quiet and pleasant, much better. We have got lovely weather now and not

a bit too hot, not that it ever was, out of doors, but in these small houses it sometimes got a little stuffy. Our back yard is full of our linen, as we washed yesterday. I have built a stable just beyond, and my horses have just come in, and we have stolen a cat, so you see we are getting on well.

M. E. P. to her Mother

New York,
Sunday, May 10th, 1863.

. . . My whole thoughts are centred at this moment upon the state of affairs between England and America. I do hope and trust the misunderstanding about these ships will be smoothed over. I cannot but think speeches like Mr. Roebuck's and Lord Clanricarde's calling the Yankees "that nation of upstarts," etc., most sweeping, irritating and mischievous. They say that in the Government here most of the influential men will do their best to avoid a quarrel, for it would ruin their trade and be an awful blow to them, but the people as a whole are in a state of the utmost soreness and anger and with them a war would be most popular. I can't bear to envisage such a possibility and so put it away from me. After speaking to those Americans who take the Abolitionist side strongly, one feels it could be accounted for in their convictions. How disappointed they must have been all through to find English sympathy on the other side, and nothing will persuade them that the reason is that in England it has never been considered an anti-slavery war but one for dominion. They may

be right after all that the question, stripped of all its accidental and party cries, does resolve itself into the choice between slavery and no slavery, and if so, we cannot but admire the way in which they have sacrificed everything to what is a great cause.

If Boston surprised me by its advancement, this place does so ten times more. Francis Baring who is here, says that we see everything *couleur de rose* from having lived so long at Montreal, but even he acknowledges the town to be beautiful in its way. There is perhaps much truth in what he says of their being a nation of swindlers, but I think the fashion of London swells to run down everything that is not according to British ideas very narrow-minded and distasteful. The first thing that struck me was the feeling of being in a great capital, which even after Boston was very striking. I do so hate descriptions myself that I am afraid of writing for fear of drifting into the usual tediousness of "a letter from New York," but certainly the accounts I have read did not convey to me what it is, so I must vent my different small surprises on you. Georgy and Emily hear all about the country from Bingham and Ned.

Well, we arrived here on Wednesday at five, having left Boston at 8.30. I had such a bad cold that I was tired and *lasséde* and not sorry to find myself in this hotel. It is by far the most comfortable I ever was in. Instead of the dirty, smoky, spitting bar you always have to walk through in an American hotel, a cool hall, with tiles, where not a shadow of any dirt is suffered,

and a pretty staircase, like a very pretty private house in London, or rather Paris, for their ways are much more French than English—led us up to our rooms—a small but pretty sitting-room, bedroom, bathroom, etc. (no man understands the intense comfort of that), and a stores room next door, the only inconvenience being that Henry is obliged to dress between the sitting-room and the bathroom, for they do not seem to have the faintest vision of the necessity of a dressing-room. We only got these rooms by writing a week beforehand, for New York, they say, has never been so full. The dining-room is a lovely room, all light blue satin, and the *chef*, being a celebrated one, it is a restaurant also and you dine *à la carte* in the most sumptuous way. Just as we were sitting down to dinner Henry had a visit from a Mr. Duncan, to whom we had letters, and he brought us his box at the opera, so off we went after dinner; though I wished very much it had been another night instead. The house is larger than either of the London ones and better lighted, but I thought the music *atrocious*. It was Aroldo—I should say Verdi's very worst—and sung by the last outs that have failed in London or Paris. There are only six private boxes on each side, of which ours was one, and these the size of the Queen's box. The rest of the grand tier is open private boxes, like the French opera.

Everybody dressed in the prettiest *demi-toilettes*—much fresher and smarter than many ball gowns. I was oppressed with my cold so I came away before the end, and the next day being

odious, dark and a cold east wind, I stayed at home and also the next day to try to get rid of my cold. There was a burst of summer yesterday and to-day has quite cured it. On Saturday we went to the French play and saw *Nos Intimes*, which amused me immensely; I don't know when I have laughed so much and so heartily. I can't tell you about the town to-day, after all, for I have had a visitor who has taken up my last half-hour. . . .

To her Mother

ON BOARD *The Canada*,
LAKE CHAMPLAIN,
May 19th, 1863.

A pencil note on the steamer, in case I should not be in time for the post on arriving at Montreal. The last night in New York we spent with the Duncans; dined with them, only meeting a Mr. Robinson who was very agreeable and told us some anecdotes about Mrs. Butler [Kemble] that I have written to Emily as I think she will be amused. Next morning, Saturday—but I am leaving out that we went to Wallach's theatre and saw Wallach's son act in *The Road to Ruin*. Well, it is the sort of old play that rather bores, with long-winded speeches and the regular scenes; however, they did it very well. Afterwards we had ices at Delmonico's, the restaurant, and took leave of our friends, who had been on *ne peut plus* civil and kind to us. Mrs. Duncan came to see me next day as I was starting, giving me a beautiful bouquet. Off we started by steamer, and went

to Westpoint, *such* a beautiful spot on the Hudson, the mountains reminding me rather of Switzerland, but of course not so high, and much greener. I should like of all things to have spent a week there, for it came nearer to feeling really in the country, with beautiful large trees down to the water's edge in the first fresh green of spring—with the lilacs in full bloom, quantities of them and so sweet—and then from our windows the most lovely view of the river, there almost as wide as a lake, and point after point of the mountains, each different and more picturesque, jutting out into the water, with the softish, bluish distance. Alas! Sunday, the next day, it poured and we *were* so disappointed, having made our arrangements to enjoy it thoroughly, and obliged to sit in a poky room instead! Monday saw us still further up the Hudson, and two hours of sailing brought us to Saratoga, where we spent the night. Henry had a shocking cold, and I a bad headache, so we did not enjoy our day much. This morning, started by railroad at 8.30, a most lovely day, the only really thoroughly satisfactory one we have had, for the others, hot as they were, had so much east wind in them. Lake Champlain all day, sitting on a shady deck, drawing, and a large cabin to myself if I wish to rest. It has been a most luxurious way of going. Two hours' tiresome railroad, however, before we get to Montreal at 10 to-night. How I am looking forward to my letters! It is dark, so I dare say you won't be able to read this.

After their return from Canada their home was still at No. 6, The Cloisters; but in 1870, when Henry Ponsonby was appointed Private Secretary to the Queen, they moved to Norman Tower, Windsor Castle. There are long gaps between the letters, but apart from those written from Windsor there are several giving accounts of visits to Osborne, Balmoral, etc., as well as an account of a visit to Germany.

To her Sister

OSBORNE,
May 9th, 1865.

Henry wrote to you yesterday to answer the two questions, which I did not. My journey was most successful, for, as *you* must have found, the Sunday rain had quite laid the dust, and in a carriage to myself the whole way, and the windows open, I thought it most enjoyable. At 1.0 I flew to Mrs. Lee's sandwiches, and pray tell her that I have eaten such things before, but never any quite equal to hers—chicken with a wafer of ham, etc., something too excellent. At Southampton I espied the manly form of the Colonel on the platform, and we walked about for an hour waiting for the *Elfin*. "And is this Her Majesty's boat?" Shephard [Maid] inquired as she stepped on board. She has made great friends with the Messenger who seems to chaperon her on all occasions, and I think she is very happy. I can't tell you how good-natured I think it is of you to give her up to me. It just makes the whole difference to my comfort; she dresses me so well and so quickly, and the only drawback is to think you are having a week of discomfort.

We dined with the Queen last night; Sir

Edwin Landseer the only guest, and very pleasant he made himself. The Queen, in high force, talked all dinner time, and highly amused at Landseer's anecdotes, about his animals, etc. We went to the Household at about 10.30, and had a tiresome half-hour with them. It seems to me strange to be here again; so many waitings and lady-in-waitings come into my mind at every turn. The last waiting I had here was with Lady Macdonald! yet all my associations are disturbed by the new part of being treated like a guest. I am in what are called the Ministers' rooms—a charming sitting-room to myself, and seeing H. walk in and out, makes me feel something between a Prime Minister and a mica-schiste. (I don't know how to spell the word.)

12.30. I have just come back from a drive with the Queen—more guestified than ever. All the drive organised that I might see the pretty places, and H.M. doing cicerone. I told her of the Duke of Cambridge's visit to you, and described Coombe in such glowing colours that I think she will nip down and look at it when she is in London.

You cannot think, after the pretty furniture in your house, and Georgie's, how some of the atrocities here strike me. It certainly is the oddest combination of upholstery; hideous presents they have received, and as ill-arranged rooms as I ever saw, yet sprinkled also with beautiful things—pictures by Landseer, De la Roche, Scheffer, in this very room, and a certain kind of *luxe* which exists nowhere else.

Extracts from a Diary

January 5th, 1868.—Heard from H. that Uncle Charles wrote to Osborne to say the Government knew of a plot of the Fenians for carrying off the Queen and that she ought to return to London immediately. She would not hear of it and is angry with Uncle C. for wishing her to go to Buckingham Palace. They are all strictly guarded at Osborne; nobody allowed to come into the house without a pass. I can't help thinking it is rather a panic; however, they had telegrams from Canada saying that a ship had started with a Fenian crew sworn to kidnap her, so it is necessary to take precautions.

Tuesday, January 7th, 1868.—Letter from H. says he is getting capital skating. It sounds very dull at Osborne. Read the *Painters' Camp* [by Hamerton]; his thoughts about Art are interesting and certainly his complaint of the position which painters hold in Society is in some ways well founded. There is always a tone, even among people who are by way of thinking an artist's vocation a high one, that they are pleased to be singular in this respect, they are rather proud of themselves for not being as other men are, and are glad to tell you of the breadth of their views. But this is much less the case than it was. Hamerton forgets that when a snob by nature—who is always making efforts to be a fine gentleman—marries into good society, it only confirms the views he complains of, and the painter has only to thank himself for the look of surprise and the

moments of silence that follow some of his speeches. Leighton, Landseer and Millais are invariably treated like Dukes.

January 17th, 1868.—Got on with *Emile* [by Rousseau]. I find myself agreeing with him perpetually on education. The whole subject of artificial thoughts (created by the folly of parents who put things into children's heads by forbidding), also the inheritance of making them use their natural faculties and gradually learn to judge, compare and weigh the things taught them by experience, instead of cramming them with books. The constant folly of mistaking your view of a subject or matter for the child's is at the root of so much mischief.

Tuesday, January 21st, 1868.—Went on with *Emile*. His views about women are strange, so very *arrièré* about their education. He does not want them to know anything, but to be the centre of a kind of *culte*, not unlike the comtiste's views of the present day. His analysis of the texture of a man or woman's mind is very true and to the purpose. One of the strangest things is to see that with all his admiration for natural ways and merits and his contempt for artificial bringing-up, he cannot get rid of the staginess himself which Frenchmen of that day indulged in so much.

February 4th, 1868.—(*Continued at Osborne*).—Went on with Tyndall—most interesting. Dined with the Queen; party—Christians, Louise, the Duchess [of Athol], Princess Henriette and ourselves. The Queen in good spirits, though the dinner hung fire at first. She cheered up, telling

anecdotes of mistakes in speaking to people about their relations, and how this happened to her occasionally. Lady Clanricarde talking of the marriage of the Duke of Wurtemburg; "Such a very bad marriage, you know." The Queen said: "As it was my first cousin I thought it best to hold my tongue." Then someone abused the custom of cousins marrying. The Queen answered: "You must remember we are cousins."

February 7th, 1868.—Start to Netley at 11.45, very cold wind. The Hospital well worth seeing, though it struck one as very cold, especially for people returning from India. My companion was Dr. Maclean, who had been in India 20 years and was on Lord Clyde's staff. He knew Lady Canning, and it was impossible to hear anyone speak with more enthusiasm and reverence of another. He said, "I may see another woman like her but I am sure I have not done so yet—if ever there was a perfect angel upon 'airth' (he was very Scotch) it was her, and such clear, bright, intellectual power about her, and dignity also. She did more to raise the English character out there than anyone." There was real enthusiasm in the way he spoke, and he added, "If you could only guess the respect and admiration all had for her." It was a great pleasure to hear her spoken of in this way, and to feel that clear, bright, true life had not been wasted. It set me thinking over former days and former talks with her.

February 8th, 1868.—Had a long talk with the Duchess of Atholl; she understands everything,

and nothing can be truer than all her views about things. The complete folly of opposition if started at once, without any care, and the ease with which advice may be given and well received, if you don't begin in antagonism. Went out with the Queen, and began by keeping her waiting ten minutes, as I had never found out that the carriages had gone round. We went to see the Fusiliers run races, and bitterly cold it was on the top of the hill. Princess Louise was with us, the Queen full of different books and magazines, in great praise of the Martins. Rather amusing the literary line the Queen has taken up since her book was published. In the evening Sir John Simeon and the Greys and Aunt Georgiana dined with the Queen ; Aunt G. too theatrically dressed, Sir John Simeon pleasant—very full of his books.

February 9th, 1868.—Went to Whippingham Church. Mr. Prothero's brother preaching—didn't think much of it. It irritates me the way they preach at the Queen. If I were her it would do me much more harm than good. The Queen lent me Mr. Martin's translation of *Faust*. I had never read it before.

February 11th, 1868.—Count Bernsdorff and Lord Stanley brought Baron Magnum, who was in Mexico with Maximilian,* to see the Queen. He is a short, dapper little man, with a very intelligent face, and perfectly ready to make himself at home. It would be interesting to hear

* The Archduke Maximilian accepted the Imperial Crown of Mexico in 1863 and was shot at Queretaro in 1867, by order of Juarez, President of the Revolutionary Republic of Mexico.

what he has to say, but it is difficult to get near him. H. took them out walking and then came back to look after me. We walked down to the sea; there was a perfectly lovely sunset. Looking back, the Campanile of the house looked bright blue against a crimson sky, the two rugged oaks at the bottom of the hill making a rich brown frame. The three strangers, the Duchess, myself and Sir Thomas Biddulph, dined with the Queen. Quite an official dinner, no dogs or trivialities of any kind. Bernsdorff on one side of the Queen and Prince Christian on the other, and a dull time she seemed to have of it; only now and then a "soooo . . ." showed that she was listening. Princess Louise looked lovely; she contrives to put on her things like a picture. Magnum sat between the two princesses, so I did not benefit by his conversation. He told Sir Thomas after dinner that Juarez did not mean to take the Emperor's life, but was completely in the hands of others, and did not dare to save him.

To her Sister

BALMORAL CASTLE,
September 19th, 1870.

. . . I have been so very comfortable and happy here this time. I am always much affected by the comfort of my quarters, and this time they are so very cosy, consisting of a small sitting-room, with fireplace in a nook, a capital solid bench for carving in the window, with a drawing table—also with drawers—a large leather table in the middle of the room, for writing, with sofa

on one side, armchair on the other, and a large press for books, etc. The sitting-room opens into the bedroom, and this again into the Queen's room. Sometimes in the morning the Queen gives me things to copy and sort, which it is a push to get done before the messenger goes. Then I get reckless and go out sketching, and have to finish writing 500 miles an hour before dinner, to be able to say I have done it.

The routine is breakfast 9.30, I generally rather late on principle, not to be obliged to see the others finish. Goschen is here and much liked; he is the most short-sighted man I ever saw, and yet sees everything; Sir W. Jenner—Sahl—Prince Arthur's equerry, Pickard and we three women; Albert Grey is "on a visit."

Then we go to write till 12.30, when the messenger goes. If the Queen goes out for the day we make an expedition, taking luncheon with us, but that happens rarely now. If not, I generally slip out to sketch for an hour, and then we have to wait for orders till 4.30. Everybody goes out then till 7.0. Now it is getting cold to stay out later, though the Queen sometimes stays till 8. It is a comfortable moment to come in and find the post, a good fire and lots of candles —so cheerful that one is quite glad not to dine till 9. It seems quite selfish with so many tremendous events going on to talk of our own little miserable arrangements at all.

During the Sedan week the telegrams kept us in a breathless state of excitement. It gives H. a deal to do, he is sometimes cyphering or

decyphering till 2, and again at 6 in the morning, seldom getting out for more than an hour or two. The interest of all the Foreign Office News at this moment makes up, however, for any toil. I go to his office now and then to take a bird's-eye view of affairs!

I have been so very well here, the lightness of the air is such as to make one sleep and eat like a grenadier. It is the kind of change of air I think would do you good, with such a country smell about everything, the heather and birches and mosses so delicious. I don't wonder at the Queen thinking she is oppressed anywhere else.

To her Mother

1870.

There does not seem to be one lingering look or thought among the French for the Emperor. The Queen of Prussia telegraphed to this Queen that he pronounces himself well satisfied with the arrangements that had been made for his comfort. The fact is, I believe, he would rather be smoking cigarettes in a luxurious palace, surrounded by his Chamberlains and cooks, than dare to face his own people. I am afraid the establishing of Republicanism will only prolong the war. The newspapers are deeply interesting. The Queen talks of nothing else. H. keeps her supplied with maps and with all the fresh movements of the troops marked upon them as they go, so she has the whole campaign as pat as possible. Halifax provokes me by always getting the names wrong as he used at Flete. Vinet instead of Vincy, etc.,

and he gobbles in such an important way about nothing and is so certain about being right about points settled days ago. Wonderfully active, however, and jumps over chairs and nearly tables in his excitement when telegrams come. He is upset by the Q.'s telegram coming 3 hours before the Foreign Office one, so his are always stale.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
September 27th, 1871.

I can't go into all the arguments about men and masters again.* Of course it resolves itself into a question of strength. If the men can accumulate capital enough, for it comes to that, to hold their own and to say, "We want half an hour more leisure a day," it is so just a demand that I cannot conceive such a demand being considered an unlawful combination or a conspiracy. If by any process of co-operation and mutual help, the men can effect in course of time that the profit shall be divided, say 20 per cent. for the masters and 15 per cent. for the men, I shall be glad, for I think it more equal. I think they have little chance as they have to contend with the accumulated capital of generations, but if they can hold out until juster views of the monopoly enjoyed by capitalists find their way into the public mind, it will be good; as it is, no fair person can say the two sides are thought to be equal—one is supposed to be fighting for the rights of property and the other to be trade

* An engineers' strike at Newcastle: May to October, 1871.

unionists, *i.e.* revolutionists, reds, etc., etc., and everybody's judgment is coloured involuntarily with this assumption. I don't say the masters are to blame for carrying on the struggle—given their position and their views it is natural, and if the men can't face them with the laws of political economy (unless indeed some new views obtained about the distribution of an undue quantity of capital) they must fall. But the odds are tremendous. I don't expect you to agree with me, you never do till long afterwards, when I hear you argue with a bigger Philistine with my weapons. I read Dizzy on the Queen. The *Pall* [*Pall Mall Gazette*] puts it most offensively for Gladstone that he runs down Dizzy through the *Telegraph*. If they don't take care Gladstone will show his teeth about Royalty altogether, and I wouldn't answer for its lasting long after that. Of course Dizzy is paving the way to come back, but I think Gladstone knows him.

To her Sister

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
December, 1871.

I was delighted to see your handwriting again. We have all been, as you may suppose, in a state of suspense and anxiety about the poor P. of W. I suppose no human being can tell yet how it may turn out, as the crisis is supposed to take place to-day, but he has been *very* ill, there can be no doubt about that. The Queen put herself into the hands of the doctors as to whether she was to go or not, and if he is not worse she comes

back this afternoon. To those who do not see him it is not supposed to be infectious, as there seems no doubt as to his having caught it at Scarborough. However, like everything else, this is denied by the newspapers.—M. E. P.

Postscript by H. F. P.

The Princess of Wales behaves very well indeed, but she cried a good deal when the Queen left her yesterday. The last account just come, 2 o'clock: "He remains the same; he is now asleep." Generally it seems to be thought all will go well, but no one can tell. We came back from Sandringham last evening, but we are ready to return at a moment's notice.—H. P.

To H. F. P.

Norman Tower, Windsor Castle,
1871 (?).

A more delightful letter than this morning's it is impossible to imagine. In the first place I am always so glad when you have a good Tory to tackle, and Salisbury is that and no mistake. It is from *parti pris* that he *is* one, deliberately, because he hates the commonplaces, the mediocrities, the emphases *à propos de rien* of the "leaders of the people" that I feel inclined almost to say "almost thou persuadest me to be a Tory" —but—and such a but that one can't even begin it. The utter absence of sentimentalism about the Crown is certainly a contrast to Gladstone, whose *feeling* was always snubbed.

Your anecdote about "rising to reply" amused

me, and the Indian news most deeply interesting, that element in Indian politics which Lord Elgin talks of, as making a double set of qualities necessary in a Governor-General, an apparent immovability and deep reverence for form and tradition, together with a power of making a clean sweep of the whole thing and starting on a new tack, quite suddenly, you show, is as strong as ever, but it is the very ignorance of how things will look which makes the whole thing so fascinating to read of and think of. A handful of Englishmen, and very modern Englishmen, *à la* Arthur Hardinge, holding their own against the subtle, metaphysical, most highly artistic and developed civilisation is the very triumph of materialism.

It is so good of you to think I shall care to hear it all and to *converse* with me. I get no talk of any sort. Do you think we shall get into a fatuous state of thinking nobody else's conversation suits us but each other's? I almost begin to think it is the case with me. I go to the Deanery and expect intense personalities and immense sympathy for one's household details, etc. The Emperor of China might have taken Buffet's place in the assembly, Cuming become Archbishop of Paris, and if Bismarck persuaded MacMahon to make him next President I do not think a single expression of surprise would be the consequence.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER,
1872.

. . . Beesley's letter is most foolish; of course the natural tendency of a strike among

agriculturists will be in the long run to break up large estates, to undermine the power of the landlords, and gradually to alter the conditions of life in England far more than any disputes between the manufacturers and artisans—but *why say so?* The ultimate political effect of such a movement is sufficiently remote to make one hope it will be arrived at gradually, perhaps not for several generations, but without spasmodic revolutionary outbursts, which leave the countries which indulge in them in a worse state than ever. By saying the things he does to people who have neither the wish nor the foresight to see the truth, he enrages the landowners who at present are able to make their men suffer for it, and he works up the labourers to hasten on measures they don't understand the *portée* of themselves. I wrote a letter to the *Daily News* against the strike; it was so imperious they did not put it in. I pitched into their correspondent's power of dramatising commonplace incidents, which was perhaps impertinent.

I don't quite agree with Caro about La Bohème. In Balzac's account of the same world he shows how limited their power really is unless there is stuff in them. This is evidently written by a man, who knowing a Frenchman's appreciation of the worthlessness of Paris Bohemians *as a lot*, has rather identified the whole commune with them, and so gives it its *coup de grâce*. . . .

I began a longish letter to you before dinner, but I am lazy and can't go upstairs for it—so will write another. First thank you for your

letter from Basingstoke—it was very good and dear of you to write it. I enjoyed your days here *too* much, for it seems so very dull to have no one to quarrel with, no one to love, and to be without the possibility of your coming into the room at odd moments. The servants are congratulating themselves on not being on the high seas as the sudden hurricane and bourrasques are fearful. I think it is the comet!

Did you read the *Pall* on Hooker? I thought it very good. Ayrton thought he was saying a smart thing about scientific men, with all that elaborate joke about organic and inorganic matters —he was showing up his own crass ignorance. I dare say Hooker was peppery, but he certainly had cause for aggravation—any idiots might know that a clerk of the works under him who *declared himself* perfectly ignorant and incapable was not a man to inflict upon Hooker for six months, but as the *Pall* says, I dare say Hooker will go to the wall and Ayrton reign triumphant over the "Slaves" of whom he declares himself the master.

To H. F. P.

37, CHARLES STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,
December 3rd, 1872.

I have much to say about Gladstone's speech,* some parts of it good, but so ill-judged to attract young men's attention to what he disapproves, without furnishing them with better arguments against the real free-thinkers than the most

* On May 14 Mr. Gladstone made a speech at King's College in favour of positive religious teaching.

THE PRISON ROOM, NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE.

obvious commonplaces which even Manning would have put into better shape.

It shows one so very much he is the exact man for the day—not too much in the *avant garde*, but with enough perception to see the problems are important, and cannot be solved in the light and airy way in which really old-fashioned thinkers would deal with them, and get so tightly bound up with the past, that the popular (though, of course, well educated) hopes and fears to find themselves reflected in all he says. I think this speech and the Greenwich one will have finished him off, though he is far greater than most of them.

In 1872 permission was obtained from the Queen and Board of Works to have all the paint and plaster stripped off the walls of two old rooms in Norman Tower which had been prisons in Plantagenet and later times. This was proved by the inscriptions on the bare stone walls. The reconstruction of these rooms is referred to frequently in the letters.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER,
August 15th, 1872.

This morning was very stormy. George [George Russell of the Board of Works] asked me to go minutely over the estimate to see that nothing was wanting, so we canvassed every corner of the Prisons, then came Seabrook, and finally Holmes. The latter frantic about taking down the oak post which makes the inner room a hexagon. I was slow in agreeing with him, as I wanted to see the lobby arch, but when I saw that a perpendicular was wanted for the corner of

the hexagon, and that it was all constructed together—I can't explain it, but will tell you about it—the controversy was tremendous—George sneering—quite impossible to keep up such a hideous thing, Seabrook, "I beg your pardon, sir, but I may have my opinion,"—each taking me in tow, and pouring their views out. I think I did right on the whole; I elected for Holmes and kept the posts, to the immense disgust of the others. The little eye I have for drawing shows me he is right, yet the edge of the wall is in their favour. Then the grand discovery is the name of "Thomas Piggott, Abbot of Chertsey," only in black chalk. Holmes rushed to the library, and found it all right—the last Abbot of Chertsey in 1429, I think, at all events 1400. That sends the whole thing back 400 or 500 years, and he says most curious. He is rather cool and conceited—might he write to the Archæological Society, and say he has found it, because he had deciphered it. I said, "Yes, of course," but his whole bearing provokes me, though he has a knowledge of these things, so one must succumb. I was an hour though, before I gave in about his post. I hope you will think I did right. Then there is much of that old English scribbling, but difficult to make out, "Mary" plain enough.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
October 13th, 1874.

I have read your extracts of Mill and also the *Pall Mall* account, and I begin to be afraid

he would not face the consequences of his opinions. To tell us to act as if our Saviour's teaching was true, and to let our imagination dwell on what our reason tells us there is no ground for believing, so that we may *hope*, seems to me such an extraordinary compromise that if I went with him, I should become a Roman C. to-morrow, for they ask no more as a start. Everything is hypothetical to the natural mind of man in the unseen world, say they; then if, by means of a series of hypotheses we submit to you, you obtain belief and hope and we preserve in its integrity the teaching of the Master every saying of whom, according to your own account, should be acted upon and made the rule of conduct, *then* run all risks of admitting more than you mean, and come to us.

The religion of humanity always appears to me to be what Huxley described it—Catholicism minus Christianity. It seems to be the last effort of man to make himself the centre of all things—his destiny everything, his powers, the only matter worth considering—and yet with all his magnificence, the dry scientific fact that human life is but a necessary in the evolution of vegetable and animal life, that the chemical conditions necessary to its manifestation may alter so as to sweep it from the face of the earth as ruthlessly as it has probably been swept from the moon or Mercury and Venus, and that to renounce all for the sake of humanity is as chimerical as to try and gain heaven by means of asceticism and self-renunciation, is an uncompromising, immoral (in

the usual sense of the word), stern, hard doctrine, but it may be all the truer for being free from illusions. Of course, one feels that everything like duty and responsibility, sacrifice of self and even honour become shadows and not binding realities, but I do not think opinions should be rejected because of their consequences, and I think people's mental development lies in the direction that they get instinctively to prefer what is highest and best as the law of their beings, without working consciously either for heaven or humanity. It is not necessary to argue with me about the horror of dirt, or the unpleasantness of a wrong bass in music, or the dislike I have of mediocre, selfish people, any more than to persuade me I had better avoid a bad smell; and so I think it is about duty (so called) and what we call right and wrong. However, that's enough at one breath. I must just add one thing—I think you mistake Morley. His is a review of another man's book, not an account of his own creed—besides, truth and falsehood are relative terms—the narratives in the Bible were related in perfect good faith by those who saw everything as the men of those days did, through supernatural spectacles. It does not follow that we must use the same, in fact it is becoming impossible to do so.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
October 23rd, 1874.

It was an unexpected pleasure getting your letter this morning, with a less welcome one from

A. E. saying she would come to luncheon to-morrow instead of tea, so I shan't be able to sketch in the afternoon as I intended—and the weather is so beautiful—I felt depressed at my solitary evening, so different from the cheerful ones I have had. It was so nice to see you really liked being here, and did not find the time long. I am hoping for my Perth letter, as the train always disquiets me. To-day I have been a prey to things I did not intend to do—children's lessons—helping them to pot their flowers till 2. Mr. Mozley's class did not come off, but a Committee composed of Holmes, Carter, Mrs. Wayte and Mrs. Ellison suddenly appeared; I had entirely forgotten them, and luckily they caught me just as I was going out. Holmes is certainly of use when one does catch hold of him, and is to send me some Japanese patterns for my shutters.

I was interested in Chamberlain's article, which I finished. I agree with him in every word, except in the practicability of carrying out his programme now, though I must say he rather sees the difficulty, and says we must fall back upon a long Tory reign, rather than pass inferior measures which become an incubus. That is what I have always felt about Forster's Education Bill. I then went down to the Class-room, arranged the books, finished the catalogue—was rather comfortable there, with a large empty table, the books and perfect peace. They lighted the gas and I wound up my work and went off to Mrs. Ellison, where I found the three girls

playing—Mr. and Mrs. E. out. They gave me some tea and we arranged the class books.

Found the children just settled at their drawing, so read *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which I was in the middle of. It is rather too ghastly for the boys, so I must find something more cheerful for them.

The *Pall* at dinner is worth writing an essay about—it is so full of interest. I am getting absorbed again in Spain, in proportion as I believe Bismarck is at the bottom of their tone to France, and I really begin *à force de l'audace* to admire B.

The man who writes rather in admiration of crime as a proof of force, should be made to face Mrs. Senior's facts—of which I think she does not herself quite see the *portée*, that the tendency to crime and perverted instincts are hereditary. I should like to have gone to the Meeting for the men and women college. If it succeeds, and I think it will, it will stop a deal of nonsense about the impropriety of mixed schools.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
November 13*th*, 1874.

Just come from London, and as I am going to dine at the Deanery I must write before I go and dress. The Prisons, having been cleaned in my absence, look very tempting, but Lily [Wellesley *] is the only woman with a dinner of canons, so I

* Wife of the Dean of Windsor.

must go. I did my work and sat some time with Mama. In the afternoon a committee on the Employment of Women, which in Lily's absence was managed by Miss Boucherett and me. We have a curious point at Kidderminster among the carpet weavers, where everybody seems to be in the right, so there is a deadlock. The masters employ women because they find for tapestry work they do their work better than men, and also that by doing so they can compete with the Halifax works, who also employ women; but the women work slower, so they pay them at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ where they give the men $1\frac{3}{4}d.$ (piecework). The men complain their labour is undersold by these cheaper wages given to women, so they strike and won't go to work unless they are paid the same; the masters won't do this, as their fires and machinery are kept going longer by the slowness of the women's work and it would not pay them, so they have taken down their looms for women and the men are gone to work again. I don't see if they struck for payment by piecework how the masters would suffer if they paid the women the same, as the slowness would tell against the workers. After luncheon at Georgy's [Mrs. Mildmay], where we talked principally of Frank and my employment, I went to speak to Miss Sheriff about Girton, but she was not at home—got my curtain from the art work place—and here I am. Oh, I forgot, I chose some books at Mudie's for the library. I see a *Temps* which I must glance at.

To H. F. P.

January 10th, 1875.

I really am ashamed of the letters I have sent you the last day or two, but what with flowers to put in, bills of fare, etc., I find myself dressing for dinner before I know where I am. To-day I am more *à tête reposée.*

I must tell you about our dinner at Frogmore, which was a success. The food was very good as it always is. Ned was impressed with Christian's wine. The party—Edinburghs,* Mary Butler and Haigh (is there an "h"?), Mr. and Mrs. Standish (she is really very pretty and very well dressed, but appeared to me dull: Mrs. Craven, whose niece she is, was a topic), Lord and Lady Dudley (she too ill to come to dinner), Colonel Maude, C. Eliott and Lady Gordon. I sat between Dudley and Maude. Really the former is too absurd in his dress, etc., but not unpleasant to speak to, and Maude I always like. After dinner the Duchess of Edinburgh played on the pianoforte with Mr. Butler, but it was bad, so very bad that nobody pretended to listen. I must say I think people are less sycophants than they used to be, for the whole society turned their backs and talked, but as soon as Lady Gordon played everyone as religiously listened. Edinburgh was rather astonished at Ned telling him he would never play the fiddle if he only practised once a month, but went into a disquisition with Emily upon violins, showing her his. He amused

* The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh were at Frogmore just after they were married.

Madame Neruda very much the other day by saying, "I use this rosin for my bow when I play in an orchestra and that when I play alone." She was on the point of saying, "What a pity they haven't a rosin for playing in time!"

Prince Christian was most keen about the races. Lily * has returned and seems to have liked her day though she says the wind was awful. She went to Devonshire House and dined out last night and has now hurried back for a party at the Houghtons', so I wonder she is not knocked up, but I think if Victoria had not been going to fill her room she preferred the combination of London and Ascot.

We dine at the Deanery to-night. Your letter about P. of W.'s visit most interesting. I dare say he does not love you for putting the Queen's case well for her.

To H. F. P.

N. T.,
Tuesday, April 6th, 1875.

Mary asked me, if I went to see her, to go early, so I did, but found her too much taken up with the whooping-cough to attend to me, so I paid my visit to Bids [Sir Thomas Biddulph, Keeper of the Privy Purse]—who was full of talk; first, theological, Newman and Gladstone—the folly and unpopularity of R. Catholicism—when I said, the truth of Transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope were as much part of a whole in the belief of R.C.s and not to be taken

* Lily [Melita] Ponsonby, sister of Sir Henry.

separately, as the Protestant belief in the Bible, without analysing many of the separate absurdities it contained—he rather gave in. Then on the Prince of Wales's visit to India and the risk the Queen took in allowing it—even the *Benefactor* knew better, for in his letter to the *Times* he wished people to consider what the effect would be of the Prince of Wales making less impression on the natives than the Viceroy, and if he outdid the latter, there might be mischief in that. Bids said he thought there ought almost to have been a Council, and certainly much more deliberation than there had been. He appeared put out at the Queen wishing to abolish the Clerk at Osborne. He said he was very useful and it added much to the drudgery to have him sent away. This he thought you would resist. . . .

I am low because *all* my perspective was wrong, yet on the 25th I am going to try and pass the 1st and 2nd grade in one, so till then my thoughts are entirely riveted on persp.

I have read 14 *Temps* and done three problems, my day's work. Nothing in *Pall.* Your article in *Echo* excellent.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
April 27th, 1875.

Well, I dare say you are right about the Ex. I dare say I shouldn't pass. The only fun of doing it is that I could then try for the third grade afterwards, and be an admitted student to all Art Schools and Libraries, besides being sure

I was fit to teach the children, which, after all, is my point—the examination is a landmark. It is on the 26th, at 8 in the morning. I shall tell no living soul I mean to try, but dare say my heart will fail me. As it is I take it very easily.

I have seen nothing of my neighbour; Lily was so oppressed with her cold yesterday that I saw the only thing she pined for was peace, so I did not go to look after her, but will to-morrow.

The *Temps* is full of Mr. Rourke having carried in the House of Commons that England should observe the same code about neutrality as France has been trying to urge for 100 years; they make so much of it, but I can't remember seeing anything about it.

Your Spelling Bee was amusing, some of the words I had never heard of, but I think I should have been among the last. What surprised me was that there should be any *teachers* among the company, for they seemed very infirm in their spelling.

The *Spectator* does not think so much of Salvini as everybody else, but all agree about his voice being beautiful.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
1875.

I received your controversial letter which I read carefully. It presents the same difficulty to me, as all the attempts to establish on a footing of common sense and rationalism, the doctrines and mysteries of a religion which itself is based

on the acknowledged belief in a series of supernatural facts. The moment the marvellous, or rather, the incomprehensible, touches the facts of to-day, brought before our very eyes, we reject it, and prefer the reasonable interpretation; but if it deals with such wonders as the Nativity and the Resurrection—it is so far back, and we have always been accustomed to treat these as matters of faith, that we find no difficulty. I must say I think the High Church and R.C.s are more consistent, as they admit the same principle throughout; therefore it is that I think they will hold fast to the distinctive doctrines of Christianity longer than the others. The thin end of the wedge of inquiry has got into the Scotch Church. It is destroying Protestantism in Germany, and your method of reducing the Sacraments to mere tokens of goodwill and fellowship seems to me a symptom of the same spirit.

I told you, I think, that I had finished Mill's book. I hear it is much abused in the *Fortnightly*. Browning has sent me up a pamphlet by Martineau upon it, also a Persian poem yesterday; the séance for the drawings was a very full one. Both mine and Mama's were in the First Class. He [Mr. Ward] was quite delighted with Mama's, and desired all the company to study and profit by them. Our Exhibition * takes place on the 10th. I am rather sorry you won't see it, for I really think it will be very creditable.

* With Dr. and Mrs. Ellison she started an Amateur Drawing Society in Windsor, and they had an exhibition every year.

I knew there was to be a Sebastian Bach anthem, so I pounded back on foot, and arrived hot and blown. The day was most lovely, clear as summer, so soft and beautiful, that I never saw anything so soft and lovely as the lights.

Courtenay and Ebury at the Deanery—Anson in the evening—looking pensively at the Dean asleep, and turning to Lily, "How sweetly he sleeps, after the toil of the day!"

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
1875.

This paper I am writing on is invented by Fox at a shilling a packet, and I think it looks very well. I am late for the post, having allowed the time to slip away over the newspapers, and I have so much to say, although I don't know that it is of any use, about the Q.'s religious assumptions. The worst of it is I agree with her politically, but the point on which I disagree with both her and you is on the importance of Protestantism as a faith. It is a *negation*, and the moment it dogmatises, ever so faintly, it shows the weakness of the position by the intolerance of its sects and the quarrels which it is vain to stop so long as each claims to draw the line of certainty at his own point. If not, and it is boldly owned there is no certainty in any interpretation, then what is and what is not essential to the faith? Newman says that any fair criticism proceeding from a purely literary spirit would say there is less real evidence for the Divinity of Christ in the words of the New

Testament than for the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Will you then admit Unitarians? In short, I think it dangerous work for any Christians to condemn others because they believe too much. *You* do not condemn them, but would admit them, because you are wiser and more tolerant than She is, but I think politically the question is a very difficult one—because the rule that tolerance is the wisest course does not seem to hold good with them. The *Pall Mall's* plan of refusing State aid, State recognition or interference in any religious matter, except where the law is broken, I must say I think the wisest. Bismarck and the Dean of Westminster say, "No, keep up the State Church that you may keep your hold on the clergy." My plan is longer, give them rope enough and perfect freedom and in the long run they will founder on the scientific and rationalist rock ahead. Because Lyons finds fault with MacMahon you rather agree with him, when *I* do you are contemptuous.

To H. F. P.

Letter describing the marriage of Lord and Lady Antrim.

NORMAN TOWER,
June 2nd, 1875.

I must begin from the night before. I told you Lily and I slipped up to the French play, *Andrea*, one of Sardou's, first seeing it in the *Academy*. Mlle. Petit was excellent. We dined off some cutlets in Mount Street and nipped there in good time. The play was excellent, but as to

lying perdu—our row alone consisted of Lord Mt. Edgcumbe and Lady Lansdowne, the Duchess of Manchester, Mr. Forbes, Mr. Calcraft, Lord Gosford and people scattered about in other parts, equally acquaintances. The play was excellent. It was some time before Lily settled down to listen, she was so much taken up with watching who was coming in. They gave us a little supper in Berkeley Square. Wedding next day: Louisa [Lady Antrim] looked very pretty. Sir George Elvey on the organ played rather too long for a start. I embraced the mothers in the vestry. We then went to see her at St. James's and to look at the presents which had increased, the royal ones perhaps not the best.

Kemp made Uncle John [Grey] walk down the steps inside the altar rails to get nearer to them. He looked as if he would like to have contradicted him, but could not do so very well. Luncheon at Bingham's, where Albert came, Harry, etc. Back to Windsor by the 4.0 train, lay down for half an hour, bills of fare! Dinner at quarter to seven. Madrigals. Supper with Helena. I mean she came to me. At dinner your most interesting letter.

I think your forced retreat in Scotland makes you lead a much more profitable life than me. You have more time to think and read. I wish to do both, but this racing backwards and forwards and my frivolous tendencies prevent my getting through anything as I wish.

Your Spanish bit is interesting and all your points such that I have already read your letter

twice, which is the great point of my day. I have been thinking over our July plans. If you could get a bit of leave, then I think it would be preferable to dragging all the children to Kent House, but we shall see. I have been to Turner's on the subject of flowers and am going to stay at home this afternoon, for though a pleasurable-looking day the east wind is awful.

I see there is a letter or article in *Blackwood's* on the state of France which seems by the review in the *Academy* to be most interesting, acknowledging that the Germans have reason for their alarm but that there is no help for it as we can't expect France to give up trying to improve, and the only remedy would be a general reduction of arms, which nobody will consent to. I dare say you have seen it.

P.S.—I am meditating how to tell Greenway to wear thin boots or shoes in the evening, for he makes such a noise tramping about.

CHAPTER III

GEORGE ELIOT

EXTRACTS from a *Journal* referring to 1874, and later correspondence with George Eliot.

George Howard [afterwards 9th Earl of Carlisle] offered to take me to St. John's Wood to see George Eliot, after asking her leave to do so, and one memorable Sunday I went off in a hansom and arrived at the Priory in the afternoon. It really was ridiculous to feel so shy and speechless; I suppose I had put her on such a towering pinnacle that I was overpowered by the idea that it was positively George Eliot I was speaking to; certainly no Emperor or King in my Court days had ever been approached with such awe; it makes me laugh now to think of the involuntary deep curtsey I greeted her with—rather to George Howard's astonishment. Now for my exact impression: at first certainly there was a disappointment; I thought her *manierée* and stilted. The whole "circle" at the Priory gave me the idea of being brought together to listen to George Lewes, who is supposed to be a brilliant talker. There was Herbert Spencer, who looked grim and unsympathetic; Lyulph Stanley, positive and overbearing; many friends I didn't even know by

name; all seemed afraid to speak, each in turn was allowed to sit next Mrs. Lewes on the sofa—a place of honour as in Germany—from which to be excluded was an offence. I have always been indifferent to the joys of meeting simply to talk, unless such meeting arose by chance, or for some object besides conversation. In my youth I liked finding myself at Lady Palmerston's or Lady Granville's, but it was without premeditation that I enjoyed talking of French literature to Odo Russell; of Rachel and acting to Julian Fane, of Church to Richard West; of Liberalism, of Kingsley, of Newman, Oxford and Cambridge to William Harcourt, but I always detested the salon idea. At Woburn, where sometimes were gathered together the pleasantest men of the day, just so far as it came naturally at dinner, or our walking, I enjoyed it. But the pose of the thing, the group after breakfast, when Hatty Russell and Lady Melgund "drew out," as they called it, people like Sir David Dundas, Lord de Mauley, Lord Granville, Lord Palmerston (this also happened at Nuneham), and two or three hours that were spent in that way, I used to be horribly bored. I remember taking Massillon and Madame de Sévigné up to my room. I wonder I didn't read the French memoirs the library was full of, and thinking how much better off I was.

One thing I remarked as being invariably the case—those women who irritated me as being over conscious of an audience and talking for effect, were often perfectly charming in a causerie *tête à tête*. I like the French word to *deviser*, which

I take to mean making out one's talk by fits and starts before the fire, thinking and talking together with a sympathetic friend, and such pleasant hours I have spent with those women who, as I thought, were provoking when surrounded by disciples or admirers. Those I have spoken of; Mrs. Sartoris (Adelaide Kemble), her sister Mrs. Butler, Lady William Russell, Lady Waldegrave (far below the others), Mrs. Craven, etc., were delightful in a *tête à tête*, but self-conscious before the world, nor was George Eliot, to my mind, an exception to the rule; not that she was a *poseuse*, and of course she was perfectly free from the tricks and vanities of the *soi-disant* agreeable woman; but there seemed to be a weight of responsibility on her as if each word must be considered in its effect and result; then the desire that any good things said by others should be appreciated gave one a feeling of discomfort if it so happened that a remark of one's own was being made to sound better than it deserved, and a feeling of irritation if called on to appreciate a somewhat indifferent observation from another obscure member of the Society, who had no wish to be dragged into the light. All this gave a sense of effort, which prevented perfect enjoyment. When I was allowed to see her alone, which happened at last pretty often, I thought that to speak to her of all that was lying deepest in one's heart and mind without reserve, and to be received in the kindest and most sympathetic way, was a rare delight. I felt compelled, if I had not felt inclined, to be perfectly true, to be not only

veracious but true, and I was met in the same spirit. There was no feeling of egotism to disturb one, for there was very little personal confidence in the talk, except as far as opinions went. I mean any mental or moral struggle which I might in my life have gone through could only have been inferred by her from the result in my mind. She one day resented this, and traces of this mood can be seen in one of her letters to me because I objected to the dogmatic tone of some of her moral injunctions. I thought, and I think so still, more positively now, that she shrank from the pessimistic consequences which might be the result of logically carrying out her theories; at least in the minds of some of her most ardent disciples; she was not content with her saying, "I think lazy, vicious, cruel conduct distasteful, no, hateful, and I am glad if my books give you that impression, but I cannot and will not erect a whole dogmatic system on this hypothesis, because such a system would be quite as destructive of free thought as any of the creeds I have pronounced to be indefensible." But she did elaborate what appeared to me to be a most inexorable and relentless system, dealing out absolution or damnation according to the faithfulness of the elect as rigidly as any fanatical priest. I dared resist this sometimes, and affected to take her at her word and renounce the intolerance of the system.

From George Eliot

THE PRIORY,
NORTH BANK, REGENT'S PARK,
December 10th, 1874.

MY DEAR MRS. PONSONBY,

For some days after receiving your note with the photographs and accompanying papers, I was head-achy and deferred thanking you in the hope that I might bye-and-bye be able to write something more than—mere acknowledgment.

I am deeply interested in what you have confided to me, and feel the confidence to be a strong link between us. But I fear that any such limited considerations as I could put before you, in the sort of letter which is all that I could manage to write specially to you at present, could hardly have much more efficacy than what you have found in my books, which have for their main bearing a conclusion, the opposite of that in which your studies seem to have painfully imprisoned you—a conclusion without which I could not have cared to write any representation of human life: namely, that the fellowship between man and man, which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent on conceptions of what is not—man. And that the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of a goodness entirely human (*i.e.* an exaltation of the human) . . .

As to the necessary combinations through which life is manifested, and which seem to present themselves to you as a hideous fatalism which ought logically to petrify your volition—have

they, in fact, any such influence in your ordinary course of action in the primary affairs of your existence as a human, social, domestic creature? And if they don't hinder you from taking measures for a bath without which you know you cannot secure the delicate cleanliness which is your second nature, why should they hinder you from a line of resolve in a higher strain of duty to your ideal, both for yourself and others? But the consideration of molecular physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action any more than it is the direct means of composing a noble picture or of enjoying great music.

One might as well hope to dissect one's own body and be merry in doing it, as take molecular physics (in which you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human) to be your dominant guide, your determiner of motives, in what is solely human. That every study has its bearing on every other is true; but pain and relief, love and sorrow, have their peculiar history which makes an experience over and above the swing of atoms.

The teaching you quote as George Sand's would, I think, deserve to be called nonsensical, if it did not deserve to be called wicked. What sort of "culture of the intellect" is that which, instead of widening the mind to a fuller and fuller response to all the elements of our existence, isolates it in a moral stupidity? which flatters egoism with the possibility that a complex and refined human society can continue wherever relations have no sacredness beyond the inclination of

changing moods? or figures to itself an æsthetic human life that one may compare to that of the fabled grasshoppers who were once men, but having heard the song of the Muses could do nothing but sing, and starved themselves so till they died, and had a fit resurrection as grasshoppers—and "this," says Socrates, "was the return the Muses made them."

With regard to the pains and limitations of one's personal lot, I suppose that there is not a single man or woman who has not more or less need of that stoical resignation which is often hidden heroism, or who, in considering his or her past history is not aware that it has been cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish actions of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation of life. And to my mind there can be no stronger motive than this perception, to an energetic effort that the lives nearest to us shall not suffer in a like manner from *us*.

The progress of the world, which you say can only come at the right time, can certainly never come at all, save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world, and that we can say to ourselves with effect—"there is an order of consideration which I will keep myself continually in mind of, so that they may be continually the promoters of certain feelings and actions," seems to me as undesirable as that we can resolve to study the semitic language and apply to an oriental scholar to give us daily lessons. What would your keen wit say to a young man who obeyed the physical basis of nervous action

as a reason why he could not possibly take that course ?

When I wrote the first page of this letter I thought I was going to say that I had not courage to enter on the momentous points you had touched on, in the hasty brief form of a letter. But I have been led on sentence after sentence—not, I fear, with any inspiration beyond that of my anxiety. You will, at least, pardon any ill-advised things I may have written on the prompting of the moment.

I hope that we shall see you before very long, and that you will always believe me,

Most sincerely yours,

M. E. LEWES.

P.S.—As to duration, and the way in which it affects your views of the human history, what is really the difference to your imagination between Infinitude and billions, when you have to consider the value of human experience ? Will you say that since your life has a term of threescore years and ten, it was really a matter of indifference whether you were a cripple with a wretched skin disease or an active creature with a mind at large for the enjoyment of knowledge and with a nature which has attracted others to you ?

Difficulties of thought and acceptance of what is without full comprehension belong to every system of thinking. The question is to find the least incomplete.

The friendship with Mrs. Lewes continued through many years, and they corresponded from time to time,

but these letters do not give a just picture of Mrs. Ponsonby's mind, as she seems to have caught George Eliot's stilted manner.

To George Eliot

TOLLYMORE PARK, CO. DOWN,
October 3rd, 1877.

DEAR MRS. LEWES,

The autumn is passing and I have not heard how you have fared this summer, whether the spot you have chosen for your summer retreat is to your liking and whether you have been free from the neuralgia which troubled you through the winter.

I am not afraid of your thinking me inopportune in my inquiries, as I carefully abstained from abusing your kindness this year by refusing to myself the pleasure of paying you *irrelevant* visits—which I felt would be an unwarrantable claim on your time and one by no means justified by your great kindness in receiving me, when I came to you in doubt and perplexity. One consults a great physician while one has any hope of cure, but it would be senseless to weary such a one with the mere repetition and recapitulation of symptoms which are evidently constitutional and probably incurable. You will, perhaps, gather from this that I am a "*lost case.*" I hope not—quite. The old perplexities return at times, but modified and softened by what I have learned from you and by the constant revolving of the vexed questions in my head. I have from time to time read passages of Mr. Sidgwick's [Henry Sidgwick, Professor at Cambridge] which I think bear very much

upon them, and although I quite admit that you were right when you showed me that the term "scientific fatalism" was inappropriate in its application to his line of thought, yet I cannot but think that the net result of his inquiry is to point out indirectly that the pursuit of scientific *certainty* is the only end likely to yield satisfactory results to seekers after truth and that all systems of ethics, philosophical and religious, are built upon unverifiable hypotheses.

His complete and searching inquiry into every form of dogmatic morality having led to the most complete scepticism I have ever realised the existence of, does not depress me, for while it forbids all mental and moral tyranny, it does not seem to me to shut us out from all high aspirations and emotions which each may build up from his own ideal, for himself. I have such a horror of doing away, as it were, with all mystery, and of taking up and explaining away in a glib fashion all the deep emotions and feelings which we must call spiritual, at the risk of being misunderstood, that I cannot tell you what repose there is to me in being thus forbidden to assert anything as absolutely true except a scientific fact. When Mr. Huxley says (I don't remember the exact words) that the demonstration of the connection between a physical fact and a mental state does not imply that we comprehend how one gives rise to the other, I rejoice and am more pleased with this confession of ignorance, and it produces a greater feeling of rest in my mind than I have felt when under the dominion of a defined system

either theological or positivist. If this certainty be not accepted, I cannot see how it is possible to refuse ultimately to adopt one of these the other alternatives, and although in the first the theory is obviously inadequate, even if not worked out by means of demonstrating untrue assumptions, and in the second the mind is asked to rest upon a sort of compromise (as I think Huxley calls it) between the scientific and theological temper more objectionable than the religious, yet I feel into one of these I must drift if I do not cling to the blessed formula—*I do not know.* At this moment, I am overpowered by the sense I always have in speaking to you, of the crudity of thought and ignorance which you must detect as underlying all these most imperfect utterances and which almost prevents my writing, yet I have so much reason to be thankful for your indifference that I take courage again and even confess to having found a source of consolation in another idea which I can well conceive will appear to you quite childish. The egotism of this idea makes me laugh at myself. It is that nobody exactly like me has ever existed or will exist. It seems to give one a *raison d'être* to think of oneself as a fresh and different cause, as well as an effect. A kind of responsibility seems to spring out of the notion that the work, bad or good, I shall do in the world, I *alone* can do. Perhaps my thoughts have taken this direction from a passage in a letter from a friend of mine (a lawyer) who sent me some time ago the Persian poem of Omar Khayyam. . . . Shortly and obscurely stated, the notion is this—

the world is nothing but the expression or unfolding of fate, and unthinking people are merely results just as are cattle or a footprint on sand. But when a person thinks understandingly and independently he is not indeed placed outside of fate, but he himself becomes an independent part of fate and his subjection as a result is lost in his participation in governing as a cause. The more perfect he is the more he modifies the whole enchainment of causes. ("The wise man is as necessary to the Divinity as the Divinity is to the wise man.") This passage conveys to me a very clear notion and one which stated in this way is not familiar to me. I am quite aware that this arises from my profound ignorance of Greek thought. A Galleena of the *Times* said the other day, "Ce que je sais, je le sais mal, ce que j'ignore, je l'ignore parfaitement!"

I have been much taken up lately by the *New Republic* and by an article by Mr. Mallock in the September *Nineteenth Century*. Have you cared to look at either? The first I think *very* witty, and it amused me more than anything I have seen for a long while, and the article made me wish so much to see you to find out if the objections I made in my own mind to his line of argument have *le sens commun* or not. Perhaps you have not looked at it. If you have a moment's leisure I hope you will, for in spite of its faults, I am sure you will think it very able.

To George Eliot

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
October 14th, 1877.

. . . We are settled at home again, having spent (myself and two girls) a delightful month in Ireland, living a great deal out of doors away from all company (such a blessing!) and every moment of the fine weather spent in exploring the hills or sailing. That part of Ireland close to the Mourne Mountains is quite lovely. My husband joined us there and brought us back through Wales. We made the journey last a week and enjoyed it most thoroughly. The Eton masters begin their ladies' classes to-day, and Betty has plunged into her work this morning with greater delight than ever. My only excuse for sending this interminable letter is that I am sure you will understand what a keen pleasure it is to speak to you quite openly and without fear of unkind criticism. It somehow *never* happens to me to come across any one who is in the least interested or sympathetic on these subjects—the consequence is, I shut all my *mighty* thoughts up—hence the awful consequence to you that, owing to your compassion, you are overwhelmed from time to time with an avalanche of platitudes! I do not say that it would not be a very great pleasure to receive a word of forgiveness for the trouble I am giving you to read this, but I must add that I very much hope you will not in any way answer me in *writing*, but let me keep as a privilege the idea you will perhaps make me some kind of rejoinder if I am fortunate

enough to find you at home at the Priory some afternoon after you are settled there?

Yours affectionately,
MARY E. PONSONBY.

From George Eliot

THE HEIGHT, WITLEY,
October 17th, 1877.

DEAR MRS. PONSONBY,

I like to know that you have been thinking of me and that you care to write to me, and though I will not disobey your considerate prohibition so far as to try and answer your letter fully, I must content my soul by telling you that we shall be settled in the old place by the end of the first week in November, and that I shall be delighted to see you there. I long to know how far that purpose for which you made your residence in London months ago has been fulfilled. And there are many other subjects, more common to all of us, that I shall have a special pleasure in talking of with you.

Let me say now, that the passage quoted from your legal friend's letter is one that I am most glad to find falling in with your own attitude of mind. The view is what I have endeavoured to represent in a little poem called "Stradivarius," which you may not have happened to read:

> "I say, not God Himself can make man's best
> Without best men to help Him."

And next—it will perhaps surprise you to know that, having read the *New Republic* I think it one of the most condemnable books of the day;

not simply because the Master of Balliol is a friend for whom I have a high regard. If I had known nothing of Mr. Jowett personally, I should equally have felt disapprobation of a work in which a young man who has no solid contribution of his own to make, sets about attempting to turn into ridicule the men who are most prominent in serious effort to make such contribution. With that impression from the *New Republic* I was not inclined to read anything by the same writer until I heard that he had repented and been converted to the emotions of gratitude and reverence. I think that kind of direct personal portraiture (or caricature, for except of Mr. Jowett and one other, the drawing is mere distortion) is a bastard kind of satire that I am not disposed to think the better of because Aristophanes used it in relation to Socrates. Do you know that pretty story about Bishop Thirlwall—that when somebody wanted to bring to him Forchhammer as a distinguished German writer, he replied, "No! I will never receive into my house the man who justified the death of Socrates."

But I am running on with a gossip not particularly warranted by the occasion. "O that we were all of one mind, and that mind good!" is an impossible-to-be-realised wish, and I don't wish it at all in its full extent. But I think it would be possible that men should differ speculatively as much as they do now, and yet be "of one mind" in the desire to avoid giving unnecessary pain, in the desire to do an honest part towards the general well-being which has made a

comfortable *nidus* for themselves, in the resolve not to sacrifice another to their own egoistic promptings. Pity and fairness—two little words which, carried out, would embrace the utmost delicacies of the moral life—seem to me not to rest on an unverifiable hypothesis but on facts quite as irreversible as the perception that a pyramid will not stand on its apex.

I am so glad you have been enjoying Ireland in quiet. We love our bit of country and are bent on keeping it as a summer refuge always.

Dear Mrs. Ponsonby,

Yours affectionately,

M. E. LEWES.

CHAPTER IV

A VISIT TO GERMANY

FURTHER extracts from the *Journal* relating to 1875, and from letters to H. F. P.

It was settled quite suddenly that if possible I was to chaperon a party going to Düsseldorf, composed of Miss Gladstone,[1] Mr. Austen Leigh,[2] Mr. Spencer Lyttelton, Mr. Gosselin[3] and Mr. Arthur Balfour.[4] Accordingly I came up on Monday, 13th, dined in Berkeley Square and went to the station. I sat and waited ; Miss Gladstone arrived in a fuss for fear I should not be there, great partings and we were off. I, the stranger of the party, took note of the rest. Opposite me sat Mr. Arthur Balfour, who shut his eyes at once and looked exhausted to begin with—a clever, intelligent face with beautiful eyes and forehead, but lower part not good, a general look of ill-health, gentlemanlike, and the most grand grand seigneur of the party. Next him Mr. Gosselin with a cheery, open face and mass of fair curling hair and much gesticulation of manner from having lived almost entirely abroad. Next to him, Mr. Austen Leigh, tutory looking, but intelligent and *spirituel*, though

[1] Now Mrs. Drew.
[2] William Austen Leigh.
[3] Afterwards Sir Martin Gosselin.
[4] Now Earl of Balfour.

rather an effeminate face. On my side, Spencer Lyttelton, 6 ft. 3, curling black hair and beard, good-looking, abrupt, throwing himself about like his father, and absent, sometimes scarcely answering when spoken to. Quiet talk among them prevailed till Dover. Then to the boat; Mary Gladstone and three of the men went to the side; I remained in the middle and talked over Berlin with Mr. Gosselin. He told me he did not believe in the Crown Princess being unpopular, that she was devoted to art and very much liked by both artists and professors, but had enemies among the Conservatives and the *grand monde*. In full praise of Odo Russell, who, he said, was the most delightful chief to work under. I felt rather sleepy and so had a nap in my deck cabin. There never was a more lovely night; we walked from the landing-place to the station, and that literally was the only tiresome thing we did; the smell of the water was poisonous. We had an excellent supper in an off room of the station, where we met B. Lascelles and the Cheshams returning from Rome. The very thought of Lascelles' anecdotes was fatiguing, so I kept clear of them. We had a courier, Erewegh by name, I believe, but he always went by the name of the insect. Mr. Balfour now woke up and came out in a new light, as being very amusing. His great dislike seemed to be to be made to talk whether he liked it or not; hated jargon of any sort, musical or otherwise. Though I had been told that he knew every note that Handel or Bach had ever written, he scarcely ever talked music. His comments on things in

general taken from the beginning of choruses in Handel's works were distinctly comic. The night passed in intervals of two hours' sleep, and then torrents of chaff, especially from Mr. Lyttelton, whose legs were in everybody's way, and was constantly being woken up and told to change his position. Mr. Gosselin produced cushions which were bagged by Miss Gladstone, and dressed himself in a fur cap and military cloak, which Mr. Lyttelton said made him look like a Kalmuk of bad society. It was a comfort to get out at Brussels for two hours. We took a room in the Hôtel d'Angleterre, to wash and dress in. After I had done with it I handed it over to Miss Gladstone and wrote letters till we had an excellent breakfast of omelette and coffee, and then we were off again. Mr. Balfour's dressing-case was certainly the most elaborate thing I have ever seen, and somehow unlike him, I should have thought, to think so much of his personal arrangements. I suppose it is really a symptom of laziness (like having the courier). The book box was now opened and *The Life of Handel*, *The Unseen World*, and some French novels were handed round. This produced instantaneous sleep which, with some snatches of reading, brought us through certainly the most tiresome part of the journey. We arrived dusty and tired at Düsseldorf at 7 o'clock. We were rather appalled at our rooms ; the landlord took us across a filthy court into a new wing just built, in which the men were still at work, and the damp was visible on the furniture. The rooms were furnished

in the German way, *i.e.* as little furniture as possible, a pianoforte which we had ordered, a *soi-disant* sofa, two chairs and a table. This sitting-room opened on three bedrooms, also most scantily furnished, with those wretched quilts on the beds which fall off in every direction. No tubs, of course, but as the weather was so very beautiful, the windows being all open and looking out on trees, it did not much matter what the rooms were like. They unpacked and began to do music *at once*, and we went to bed at 12. I unhooked the looking-glass from the wall in my room, and put it topsy turvy on a chair, improvised a dressing-table with the top of my cupboard, and so made myself tolerably comfortable. The next morning we all had *déjeuner* in the Coffee Room at 12.30, and then walked out to see the town. It is much prettier than I expected—a really lovely garden, one end of which looks over the Rhine—streets uninteresting and modern, except for one or two corners. In the afternoon we had some music in our room, Bach's Fugues and Handel. Mr. Leigh plays with wonderful execution, and reads music in the most masterly way, but there is something harsh in his touch. Mary Gladstone said that it was not to be compared to Mr. Gosselin, whom we parted with in sorrow, he being obliged to go to St. Petersburg, having been promoted from Berlin. Upon further acquaintance I liked all my friends in different ways. Mr. Balfour I think the cleverest, but he does not give himself the trouble to know one exists, half the time, and there is no affectation of

any sort in him, but when he rouses himself to say anything deliberately he expresses himself more clearly and forcibly than most people. It is ill-health that makes him languid and limp—but he has conquered it to a great degree, and never wastes his strength on things that are not worth it. The net result is that he is formidable, as one is always afraid of boring him. Spencer Lyttelton most amusing, his epithets killing, a kind of stutter sends them out with force:

"Balfour, I don't know whether it is the vulgarity of your manners, or the ugliness of your appearance which is attracting public notice, but we are the centre of attraction for all observers."

Mr. Balfour invested in a large soft felt hat, so that he could sit on it at the rehearsals (of the Musical Festival), and he had also a long black coat which made him look like a disreputable Archdeacon.

On our first day we went to a rehearsal at 4 o'clock, of the Jupiter Symphony and Beethoven's Mass; the former went beautifully and Joachim had no fault to find, but the Mass exercised him much. The singers would not take up the points clean—not as well as an English choir, but their intonation was free from vulgar twang. He almost over-conducted, every note he seemed to mark with the exact nuance, and his band seemed scarcely up to him. Then the Mass itself was most awfully difficult, there being several bars where the trebles had to dwell on high G, A, B, with a climax of four bars on the latter note. The *Benedictus* with the Violin Obligato was grand, and the *Agnus Dei* passionately pathetic.

On Sunday we met Mr. Goldschmidt (Jenny Lind's husband) and Mr. Grove, Editor of *Macmillan's*, at the Concert. Mr. Grove told me that the orchestra did not much like being led by Joachim, he frightened them—for he expected so much from them. Mr. G. had just been conversing with Schumacher, the correspondent of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, who was full of the snub Bismarck had received from the Emperor of Russia and Gortschakoff, and that he attributed much of the zeal for peace to the influence of our Queen on the Emperor of Russia and the Emperor of Germany. Very strange how the Press gets hold of a right version sometimes. Of course I listened to it all in ignorant silence. Next morning we started off at a quarter to nine for the Rehearsal. The heat and stuffiness of the room were asphyxiating. We had breakfast in the Beer Garden, omelette and coffee, really excellent. I was so glad to hear the *Hercules* before the Concert, as it is so difficult to understand. Madame Joachim sang really magnificently. She has a beautiful mezzo soprano, and I could not understand why I admired it so much more than when I heard her in England. Mr. Goldschmidt said that she could not sing when she was there because the public were so unsympathetic ; she could not understand English and she did not like the country. She has been for three or four years under her husband's training, and the result was that the way she got through Dejanira's part was perfect.

Mary Gladstone proved difficult to know ; she

certainly was not commonplace, a capital musician, and a kind of latent force about her reminding one of her father, but on the whole the unknown predominated, absent and dreamy like her mother, and at times disappointing.

May 18*th.*—Same programme. Rehearsal at 9. But no seats, 500 people sent away. Mr. Goldschmidt thought he might possibly get two tickets. I thought I would give up my claim and not hang about on the chance, so I returned to the Breidenbach, and met Mr. Balfour, who was late. I found that he had just ordered breakfast for himself, so I did the same and we had a very pleasant time. I can't get over the idea that one is boring him, but if he does rouse up to take an interest in the conversation, he can be most agreeable. He has been looking into the spiritualist séances, and rather in fear and trembling I asked him something about them; he was very dry at first, but argued the case for a real inquiry with a good deal of force. He disposed of my argument that a rational inquiry was impossible when you were put by force into a set of conditions where you were unable to use your senses and your reason; for instance, the darkness that prevents detection. Also that if from amongst the mass of imposture and tricks, cases of really unaccountable and mysterious communication with the unseen world were genuine, it was a pity that they were on the borderland of trick, that the *mise en scène* was of the conjuring kind, and that there was no single instance (quoted by believers) entirely removed from all possibility of imposture. People

were dragged up from the ground, or from one room to another, but never taken from France to England by the spirits. Mr. Balfour said that he supposed a more critical and sceptical set of people than those assembled in his house for these inquiries could not be imagined, his brother Gerald and Mr. Sidgwick the Professor being as unbelieving as he was, yet on the whole the evidence seemed gradually to be turning in favour of unaccountability and mystery. From this we got to Port Royal miracles, Ste. Beuve, French scepticism and the *naïveté* of English unbelief, which was rather proud of itself and for a long time has looked upon Colenso as an advanced thinker to be admired *en cachette*. In the evening Brahms led his own symphony at the Concert.

May 19*th*.—We started from Düsseldorf at 6: my friends went about the town and we were to meet at the station. We were appalled by our bill, £2 a day a head, but it was no use remonstrating, as the man said it was Festival time and all prices were fair. We went to Hôtel Disch at Cologne, and so as to be left in peace I had a fly and went round the town, saw the Churches, one fine Rubens of the Crucifixion of St. Peter. One curiosity shop full of beautiful things, but all too dear for my means. Dinner at 4, a very cheerful one, everyone in good spirits at the success of the whole expedition, Mary Gladstone rather troubled at the attention she was forced to pay her aunt, old Miss Gladstone, who came to the Hôtel Disch 6 years ago, and has been "going home" ever since, but never can make up her

mind to start. She sits surrounded with books and flowers, and every fortnight her maid packs, and then she changes her mind. She turns night into day, generally getting up at 11 p.m.

To H. F. P.

DÜSSELDORF,
Tuesday, May 16th, 1875.

I was very sorry that *peripeties* prevented my writing yesterday. I lost my friends, not from my fault, but theirs. I might have known how hopeless they were about time.

First we started at nine o'clock (¼ before) for the rehearsal, in the middle of which we breakfasted in the garden below on omelette and coffee. We didn't get out till one, and then it was appointed we should meet for dinner at 2 at the Thursnagel Restaurant. I made Mr. Goldschmidt (Jenny Lind's husband) write the name in my pocket-book, and I proceeded to explore the shops. In an old curiosity shop I met Mr. Grove—an ugly man—the Editor of *Macmillan*, and who manages all the Crystal Palace Concerts ; we both agreed there was nothing there we couldn't find in Wardour Street, and I jumped into a fly, and actually steered the coachman really a long way to a smaller shop I had seen the day before, where I invested in a silver-gilt rosary—my gift out of G.'s money.

I returned to the minute to the Restaurant, dismissed my fly, no signs of them—interpellations with head-man—walked up and down for twenty minutes, then insisted on looking at the rooms

upstairs to see if they were there—took a fly and went back to the Hotel, up 8 pairs of stairs—*no signs*—back again to Restaurant—they had been in my absence and ordered dinner in half an hour; wearied and angry I returned up all the stairs again, till Mr. Leigh found me there, *most sour*. When I got to the restaurant, finding Miss Gladstone calm and smiling—with a "so sorry" like Mr. Gladstone, I said, "I shall know in future what to do, either not part with you for a minute, or stick to the Hotel till somebody comes to fetch me." I am afraid my chaff that "being a soldier's wife, and not a musician, I was accustomed to keep appointments," had a vein of bitterness in it. However, dinner restored good humour.

Mr. Grove dined with us and was amusing. A riddle: "What is the difference between a bell and an organ? One sounds when it is tolled, and the other says it will be blowed first."

We got back to the hotel to dress for the concert. I am quite surprised at the extensive dressing and eating, gowns from Worth and champagne suppers; not at all the German simplicity one is told to expect. Prince and Princess Hohenzollern and their friends chose to go up into the gallery where we were, so the overpowering swells downstairs were disappointed. I purposely gave you no details of the music—the account you may have seen in the *Times*, written by Mr. Leigh. Madame Joachim was the heroine of the evening, singing the part of "Dejanira" in *Hercules*.

I declined to follow Miss G. in a ramble out

of doors between the parts, the tussle at the doors is something awful, and she is so vague that she is quite as likely to ask directly to go back as not. I like her, and her insouciance and absence of ceremony is much better than the opposite extreme would be, but at times it a little irritates one. It is an immense comfort she has got her cousin here, for they are on the most fraternal terms, and it entirely prevents my having any scruple as to saying I *won't* do things.

In the said interval I had Goldschmidt and Grove to speak to, and they were full of musical facts which interested me. We came home to supper at 10 (so we had 8 hours' music in the day) and walked out afterwards till 12.

Really I think this place is maligned as to beauty; the town is modern so far, but there is a lovely garden—rather a park—in the middle of the town, through which you may walk to the different quarters, and large trees overlooking the Rhine. We walked to these last night, and the nightingales were quite astounding at 12. I struck work, and said I was going home, for they would have remained there till now.

This morning a rush for the quarter to nine rehearsal. Found a queue of half a mile, and no possibility of places. Through Mr. Goldschmidt we got two, which were bagged by Miss G. and S. L., so I returned to town. Met Mr. Balfour and told him of our fate, which he received philosophically.

I then explored the part of the town I had not yet seen, bought a piece of pottery, went to the Market, which reminded me so of Coburg—though

the market-place is not so picturesque—but the people's caps and umbrellas and the *tout ensemble* are the same. Came back to Hotel, and found Mr. Balfour had just ordered his breakfast, and I did the same, and we had it *tête à tête*. I certainly like him the best of the party, though Spencer Lyttelton makes me laugh more. His (S. L.) perfect recklessness of blurting out in a quick ridiculous voice—what he thinks—in a pause of the music—he exclaimed quite loud last night, "Wonderful—wo-o-onder-ful"—we thought the music was too much for him—"wonderful stink"—and so it was, from the horrible German plan of shutting every window.

I scarcely dared enter with Mr. Balfour on his spirits (he has séances in his house), but made the plunge at breakfast; he answered in a very high-and-mighty way, "It would be very difficult to approach the subject in a more sceptical and calm investigating spirit than we do; at present I am not convinced, but the weight of evidence seems to be in favour of the truth of some of the spiritualist assertions." He has a way of talking in a dispassionate *lassé-ed* way of a subject—disliking to hear himself speak—the exact opposite to Browning, which is attractive. He thawed a little over French literature, and said he and his brother had intended spending two years in a German University, to try and understand German life and thought, but he is going round the world with Spencer Lyttelton instead, as he wants rousing after the death of his sister, which was an awful blow. At this moment he is playing a

fugue while I am writing. Entrance of Spencer L. who says there are places for the second part, but as it is for a thing I don't care for so much, I shall stay here and finish my letter comfortably.

I have got a little touch of headache, for the first time, so I will lie down for half an hour while they are still out. We haven't yet settled our journey back. The men meant to stay on a little, and to send the Courier back with us, but Grove has told them there is to be a wonderful Concert at the Crystal Palace on Saturday, so they come back with us. We start Thursday night, either going to Cologne on Wednesday, and taking the X train, which doesn't stop right through to Calais, or starting from here, and not minding the stoppages. I did not like to make a stop for the extra day, though I made a stand to arrive Friday evening.

Now, to tell you how glad I was to get your letter—though I groan at the thoughts of your being in that place once again. You posted your letter Friday, and I got it Monday evening. It is very long, and now I shan't hear again, I suppose, as you thought, as I did, that we left this on Tuesday. You will be quite worn out with this.

To H. F. P.

DÜSSELDORF,
Thursday, May 18th, 1875.

We are all very flourishing, and when I have said that it is almost all I have to remark, the events of the journey being related. Yesterday I took a fiacre for an hour, and drove about. The

town is much prettier than I expected, but in a modern way. Pretty public gardens, and out of our windows avenues of trees on each side of the Canal, which give a shady look to the place. The part of the hotel we live in is brand new, and we have to climb over workmen and make our way through paint and dust before we get to the rooms, but being new they are, at all events, clean. The sitting-room is scantily furnished, a round table, with four chairs round it, a straight-backed Utrecht sofa, a chiffonier, on which may be seen *Lord Shelburne*, *The Unseen Universe*, Jevons' *Science of Metaphysics*, Poems by Peacock, *The Life of Handel*, etc., etc., enormous music books, a pianoforte; next the drawing-room is my room, also with as little furniture as possible; beyond it, Miss G., on the other side of the sitting-room, also opening into it Mr. Lyttelton's, above Mr. Balfour and Mr. Leigh.

The weather is so perfectly lovely that the absence of hangings and carpets is a comfort, but if it was dismal I cannot conceive anything more cheerless than the German fashion of furnishing. My friends have no other thoughts but their music and peace. "I announce," said Mr. Balfour the first day, "that I go to see no Churches, no pictures, and no monuments," so I did my round alone, and longed for somebody. To-morrow I must have another hour's fiacre, and go to the Rhine, which is close at hand. I saw two Churches yesterday, and bought two pieces of Faience for two or three grochen. I also went to the big booksellers, and saw the photos that were being

done at Dresden. I think I must go there again, but it is very difficult to explain things to the coachman.

When I got back I found them, as I thought, gone to the rehearsal, and so pounded after them in the sun with the courier, and had to wait half an hour, as they were drinking coffee in the garden. I won't detain you upon the rehearsal. It would have been delightful—Beethoven's Mass in B—if the atmosphere had been less awful, but they will have all the windows shut. I can't conceive what Germans are made of to bear it at all. Joachim I never saw before as Conductor, and he was wonderful in his drilling. The whole of the Musical World is dropping in by degrees.

After I had written yesterday the others came back, and there was much music, fugues, overtures, etc., till time to go to dinner at the Thursnagel, where they kept us waiting two hours between our food, till we nearly went mad. Mr. Lyttelton, seizing a Kellner at last—"Degraded German as you are, neither in the Army nor in the nursery, which your size would lead one to expect, at least pursue your humiliating avocations, and provide Britons with food." The man thought it was some friendly greeting, and looked up with a benevolent smile. Back again to the hotel, where more practising, coffee and ices, on to the Concert in a carriage; I refused to go on foot as it poured with rain, and the streets were reeking with wet.

The Concert was magnificent, and Madame Joachim was nearly immolated under the bouquets

and flowers. I never saw Joachim lead before, and it certainly is grand. We got back at 10.30, supper and up in our rooms again at 11. I declined waiting to hear the nightingales in the rain and wind, for I really was tired; they came in soon and played fugues till 12.30, when I said good night. Miss G. took the inner room, so I can't go to bed till she does.

This morning, peace and shops, all *very* low; the bill—I never can divulge what it is, but the landlord entrenches himself behind the fact that it is an exceptional time, and that we only once had our meals at the regular hour. Mr. Leigh, who is as poor as I am, is silent and angry; Mr. Balfour dignified, and analyses the bill like a Chancellor of the Exchequer, but says before the word "exceptional" one must bow. I luckily have G.'s present to fall back upon, which will prevent my indulging in the vagaries I intended at Cologne. They are gone to the garden for "the last time," says Miss G. pathetically—she is very sorry to go.

CHAPTER V

1876–1895

After 1879 the number of letters preserved belonging to this period is small; some letters written to Mrs. Ponsonby have been inserted as likely to throw light on some of her activities and interests. Among these are some from the Queen, and several are from Everard Primrose, who was a brother of Lord Rosebery and, before entering the diplomatic service, had served with Henry Ponsonby in the Guards.

To H. F. P.

37, Charles Street, Berkeley Square, W.
[? 1875].

Uncle Henry [Lord Grey] says Gladstone is reducing himself to the level of a pamphleteering parson. George Byng, who was quite *degourdied* with B.'s champagne, said the effect upon him of seeing G. devote himself to splitting hairs with the priests and abusing the Pope, is the same as if he found him playing privately at Aunt Sally in his own room. The fact is he has made the Pope rather a *débutante* in good society, for nobody before spelt all his sayings. I rather took up your line about the importance of Roman C. opinion, seeing what a mass of people there were who believed in them. This made Nod [Baring]

rather sick. They were all full of the Tory strength. "Brute force," said Enfield, "and the more we get of it, the better. It will turn their heads." "Yes," said Ned, "and then will come a thundering ecclesiastical measure, which will bring on the Disestablishment of Church, and they will go to the wall with a regular smash." *I* don't think so—the country is in a very supine state—I think it would almost allow the return of purchase, rather than get the old ministers back—and the really resolute liberals, even backed up by the dissenters, are too few to have the smallest chance of success. You would have been amused if you had heard me taking rather the side of Exchanges with Bingham, who said soldiers were the only people who were found now willing to buy and sell their places. My arguments were much better than yours.

I am afraid this is late. I have done *The Employment of Women.* Just stepped in to make a quorum, and getting into the chair, whipped through the business in half an hour.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE.
[? 1876].

I have been much taken up with Belgium, and think we are on the brink of a row. Bismarck snaps his fingers at *us*, and cannot forego the advantage of making Belgium the base of his operations against the French. I hope Disraeli's thankful rest won't extend so far as to take that

quietly. I do not think I am a bad political prophet, for I foresaw, when the Queen and Dizzy went in for ultra-Protestantism, that a continental row would either bring them into a firmer alliance with Bismarck than the country would care to back up, or into collision with him. Perhaps it will blow over.

To H. F. P.

Norman Tower, Windsor Castle,
June 6th, 1876.

I was highly delighted with Girton, a much prettier building than I expected and a look of go and life and doing about it which pleased me. Of course, much of it is unfinished and the stucco walls look bare, but the lecture rooms and mistress's sitting-room done with Morris-like paper and hangings are very pretty. Madame Bodichon has done some beautiful drawings for some of the rooms. Then the Cambridge people arrived. We first had a most excellent luncheon of pressed beef and pale ale. Mr. Wright, hearing there was some difficulty in getting our new wing finished, went off to settle it all with the builder, for in case there should be a question of strikes a word from him would clear all difficulties. Getting away from Cambridge, being Whit Saturday, was a perfect pandemonium. The contents of four excursion trains on the platform, all late. We got to London at ten and very glad we were to get food at Lady Stanley's.

From H. F. P. to M. E. P.

BALMORAL,
June 6th, 1876.

Anticipations of forty winks pervade the tone of your letter I received yesterday afternoon and I gather from it you were tired after the ball. I shall be glad to hear of what you did at Girton and whether your visit was a successful one. The Queen went off yesterday morning to see an ex-housemaid's funeral, but fortunately none of us were ordered to attend and I met Lady Erroll and Miss Lascelles in the woods, dodging for fear of being caught by the Royal party who were bent on their mournful mission. Bids writes to me that when here he heard of nothing but Turkey, whereas in London he scarcely ever hears it mentioned. It is, however, very interesting, I think, to watch events. The Five Powers—more or less hurt with us for not joining in their imbecile note to the Porte—were sold by the change of Sultans.* Of course the suicide of Aziz is of no political consequence. But now they are beginning to ponder over the next step. The Austrians declare they never liked the note, never expected we would join it, and only adopted it as a compromise. The French are ashamed of themselves for being in such a hurry. The Russians were disappointed, but already are preparing their next move. A general conference of all Six Powers. The French gave a hint they would propose this—but Derby asked on what basis, and this

* Deposition of Abdul Aziz on May 30th, and appointment of Murad.

shut them up, as they had no plan. Gortschakoff is, however, preparing his plan, and they believed has secured the help of our *Times*, if, indeed, he does not write the article himself—pointing to making Bosnia, etc., semi-independent or vassal states. The Austrians don't like this—but he thinks he will upset the Austrians. These, however, are merely surmises, but diplomatists must put out their antennæ and feel for the least movement in politics.

To H. F. P.

Saturday, June 12th, 1876.

I feel as if I had tons to write on your *exposé* of all the Russian and Turkish views, for I don't think any of them quite fit *me*. The *Times* and the *Telegraph* are unfair upon Gladstone, I think. It seems to me much more to the point to prevent the Government from acting than to dictate to them what to do. If the Russians insist upon the opening of the Dardanelles and bagging Armenia, I don't see how we *can* object. The freeing of Bulgaria and so making the cordon round Turkey strong and secure seems to be an unmitigated good, and the *Pall Mall's* blue devils, as to its being at the expense of our Empire, seem to me false. Andrieux was good upon it. He is a socialist and hates the Russian Government, but he (as Gladstone justly observed all the English historical school did) looks upon the question with the help of a cultivated mind, historical and ethnological knowledge also being

brought to bear on the question, and says that if you look at the map and ask yourself if it is possible for a small island in the North-West of Europe to stop the natural development of a strong race and their migration towards the sea coast with an outlet for their navy, I think everybody must see that with such a rotten dam as the Turks it cannot be right, or rather it is foolish to attempt to do so.

From H. F. P. to M. E. P.

BALMORAL,
September 11th, 1876.

The arrangements for to-morrow are in the vague, as it seems uncertain whether the Princess [Alice] will arrive at 10 in the morning or at 5 in the evening. I have been reading Gladstone's speech at Blackheath which he delivered with his shirt collar undone. I can see him. It seems to me very good and emphatic and forcible. Only I don't agree with him—or rather I don't understand what he means by driving the Turks—the official Turks—away. Does he mean out of Europe, or out of Bulgaria? Of course if the Six Powers agree they may put a moral pressure on the Porte, but force would be war and war of a desperate kind which would, I believe, cause far greater atrocities than before. I think in taking the line he has and leading the opinion, Gladstone has done good in giving a check to the nonsense of declaring that Dizzy and Derby are responsible for the atrocities. Bids and I have arguments about it. He maintains that the Government

knew of the atrocities long ago and were silent because the facts told against the Turks. I don't think so. But they certainly knew that many details were true on 14 July. Why not then have said something? And I don't acquit Elliot, for he was told of these atrocities long ago by the American Missionaries and took no notice. This was started a fortnight ago in the *Daily News*. And now I see the accusation is repeated by Miss Albert at a public meeting at Manchester, and taken up by the papers. Last night at dinner Prince Leopold, who had got into difficulties in some argument about Sir William Wallace, cut it short by saying to me across the table, "You don't believe in Sir William Wallace, do you?" I said "No"—which raised a storm, R. being indignant and the Queen exclaiming, "If no one is to be believed in, the people in future generations will not believe in us." Dr. Lees of Paisley combated me by saying there were undoubted proofs of Wallace's existence. I explained to him, though others wouldn't listen, that I did not express a doubt that Wallace had lived, but that he was a hero I did deny. His greatness had been created by Miss Jane Porth. This made Lees laugh terribly—as he said there was so much truth in it. "But you believe in Robert Bruce," called out the Duchess. The Queen, afraid I would say "No," said, "Why, if it had not been for Bruce we shouldn't have been here at all." Of course I declared I fully believed in Bruce, and the excitement calmed, the discourse changing into inquiries about Bruce's grandfather

and ultimately into a Devonshire story by Northcote. . . . The Queen—desiring that I should not be asked—sent Flacce to ask Northcote how Goschen had behaved on the Titles Bill *—as if he had not been prominent in opposition she would invite him here to dinner. Of course Northcote advised that he should be invited—and I believe he is to come to-morrow.

To H. F. P.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE,
Tuesday, September 12th, 1876.

Here I am comfortable enough, having slept well in those fine sheets, the one remaining *luxe* of the establishment which Cowell [Master of the Household] is trying to do away with.

I have a sitting-room on the ground floor with bedroom attached, very comfortable in its own grim way, and here I have spent the morning reading Gladstone, every word of which I agree with, and then Professor Andrews, which took me longer and which I cut out to paste as a record of *où en sommes nous* in 1876, as to science. I then fell to considering points in your political *aperçus* I don't approve of. Your love of justice and fairness, your wish to get hold of every possible fact for and against before you approve or condemn, are great qualities *but* built upon a large variety of instances I can't quote, but the principal of which are the Empress's Title and the Government policy in the East. Your knowledge in the pursuit of accuracy is not broad enough

* *I.e.* The Queen becoming Empress of India.

and misleads you, or rather gives you *l'esprit de l'escalier*. You never venture to condemn for fear of being unfair. You fear generalisations as being vague and you often set aside as irrelevant considerations which may be too abstract if taken alone, but which you could apply to the political case of the moment if you had studied them beforehand. You have often twitted me with being either too historical in the instances I quote for guidance or too broad in my prophesies for the future, yet in all humility I say it (knowing well how inferior I am to you in detail), my first judgment in a matter, though perhaps too absolute, is as often, if not more often, right than yours—and so ends my political sermon.

. . . I went to the National Gallery. I think the disposition of the room good, very, but the lighting very bad. The ceiling all of ground glass gives a dull yellow reflex, cutting the pictures in a disagreeable way. I can't find my way about yet, but am going again to-day to make it out a little.

From H. F. P. to M. E. P.

BALMORAL,
November 6th, 1876.

After my observation on the Queen's determination not to entertain other views than those of Derby's I was much startled, when I saw her to-day, at her telling me that Europe was tired of this constant uncertainty in the East, that the matter ought to be settled at the Conference for good, that she had always thought the

only way of meeting Russia was to give the Principalities independence, and raise a barrier of free states—now this is Gladstone and Freeman, and if I had suggested it I should have been howled at. But it comes from her alone, at least as far as I know, with an expression of anxiety lest the late Turkish victories should make them too arrogant to listen to such a proposal. True she did not say anything about Bosnia, but I have touched on that in the enclosed which I have written up to her at the Glassalt. Keep it for me. I am sympathetic. I have got your letter having heard of the proposed conference. Elliot particularly asks not to have it at Constantinople because his views on preserving the integrity of Turkey are too well known to admit of his supporting any other plan, besides which he declares that it would be under Ignatieff. But Derby prefers Constantinople. I don't know why. Whether he wishes to carry on Elliot's policy or whether he hopes to square matters, as he intends to send out a Plenipotentiary to act with Elliot. But we haven't settled the Armistice yet—I mean the boundaries—and then must come the preliminary discussions as to the action of the Conference. The Queen is eager about the Arctic expedition. I think they have endured much and done well. But they have not done what they were sent to do, and I was opposed to making too much of them. However, she insisted on my writing to Hunt to congratulate them on—well, there I got bothered—but I made out a sort of congratulation. I think they did very well, but

the less fuss made about them the better. We have snow to-day on the ground; not much, but all white.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
November 8th, 1876.

First, your letter last night, full of interest and of your sympathetic relations with H.M. I walked with Bettie on the slopes and met the Dean, who told me of his warnings to you and said H.M. had complained before now that she was sure you were influenced by my *decided* politics—he said he did not know whether she meant him to give me a hint, but he fancied she did. She really is *very* much afraid of me. Pearson's religion and your politics she thinks in great danger! Really it is so absurd that it makes me feel inclined to put on a mysterious look as if I were in hourly communication with the opposition.

This morning's news I think puts all trifles and things irrelevant in the shade. I think Lord Salisbury as our representative is splendid—an intellectual aristocrat is the very exact word for the situation. I am sure he is not Philoturk, nor is he likely to give in to Gladstone's reaction in favour of Russia. I don't think there was *any* man in the last Government to be compared to him in fitness. I am quite delighted—for of course all rotten disputes between Liberals and Conservatives sink into insignificance before what is necessary for the country. I trust he won't be a disappointment. I haven't read my *Pall* yet —I doubt its being cordial about his appointment.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
November 19th, 1876.

Yesterday I sent you my letter by first post, then went to London and did some shopping for the children, and was inveigled into Madame Tussaud's by Bettie and Mags. The interest being Henry V's Court and Chaucer, very little attention paid to the modern Royalties. Prince Christian looks in the group like Strathbogie and Helena like his granddaughter. After Tussaud I sat with Mama. To-day I went to the Deanery for tea and met Thomas Grosvenor very full of the East: he believes in Salisbury, if not bamboozled by Greek Church sentimentalities, but he is not so clear about the uselessness of Austria. I am rather sorry the Turks have consented to the conference, for if they had not, one could not blame the Russians for pressing forwards. I have read all your statements two or three times and think they show how difficult the whole matter is, but it is good to keep a clear idea in one's head, and that to me is, that a second war for the rehabilitation of Turkey, whether it takes the shape of backing our own interest or not, is quite impossible. I am curious to see what will happen, but I think it will be anything but a short and sharp business. I haven't read my papers to-night and am very backward just now with the *Temps*. I go up to London for Girton Committee to-morrow, and sleep in London.

From Lord Granville to M. E. P.

At the time when there was a suggestion of the post of Black Rod being offered either to H. F. P. or to Sir Thomas Biddulph.

WALMER CASTLE, DEAL,
April 1st, 1877.

MY DEAR MRS. PONSONBY,

I never grieve for having lost a pleasure which is past, and a letter is a great compensation for having missed you at Mrs. Baring's.

I need not say that it would have been very pleasant to have talked over many things.

As to the Black Rod, I presume it would be an immense loss for either your husband or Biddulph if one of them took it. In the difficult position in which both often are placed it must be a great comfort to have a colleague on whose discretion they can so thoroughly rely.

The loss of either would be great to the Queen and therefore to the public—a man weak either in ability or in character might do irreparable mischief. Conceive a youthful Dizzy and a youthful Augustus Clifford there.

The temptation to remain consists in the use they know they are in their respective offices, and in the knowledge they get of everything important that is going on. As to the occupation I should think either of them could create occupation as pleasant. If either of them were one-tenth as idle as I am, they would appreciate an office of which the work takes up on an average an hour or two for four days in the week, every

five months of the year—with a necessity of making acquaintance with some of the pleasantest men in society.

It would be rather agreeable for us Peers to have you and Lady Biddulph to lunch and tea with during long dull debates.

Why is old gossip so much pleasanter than new—particularly if it is about someone of whom one has heard talk in one's youth ?

I have always heard both Lord and Lady Bathurst mentioned as being pleasant.

As to Dizzy, he is very amusing at times, but really not a good member of society—of which he has not the manners—and is without ease or nature.

I heard an excellent account of Lady Jocelyn yesterday.

My best regards to the General.

Yours very sincerely,

GRANVILLE.

From H. F. P. to M. E. P.

BALMORAL.
May 20th, 1877.

. . . What I object to in the Russophils is, why be so very anxious on behalf of the Russians ? They are quite able to take care of themselves—why say that it is to be hoped the Russians will beat down the gates of Constantinople ? *Et puis ?* No—that is quite unnecessary. The Turks are not to be supported, but why are the Russians to be encouraged by us to swallow up all the strong places in Turkey ? Why go to extremes ? This

it is which drives the others to extremes to wish to fight for Turkey, which is equally absurd. Here, no doubt, I am in a strong pro-Turkish atmosphere. I dare not, after the attack made on me, dissent from what I certainly do disagree about, but I have no difficulty in joining in the condemnation of Russian movements and tyrannies, though I qualify what I say by the words "if true"—believing that the stories of Russian atrocities at Tchumk Su, etc., are not true. I also think that the Emperor would, if he could, make peace. At the same time I cannot help fearing that we are taking more and more an antagonistic position as regards Russia, and our secret endeavour to secure the co-operation of Austria is, I think, most dangerous. Our stiff answers to Russia are read with delight by the Turks and estrange us still more from Russia. The Queen told the Duchess of Edinburgh that the Turks had had a victory, and the Duchess telegraphed to ask the Czar, who replied there had been a trifling engagement of no consequence. . . . The Queen was anxious to know whether I had seen Beaconsfield when in town. I slurred it over and said I had seen Monty Corry. I don't at all care for calling on Beaconsfield to talk of rain and fine weather, and don't suppose he can care to see me. I believe Lord Sydney is to have his picture done by Angeli, who is now the great painter of the day. At dinner Princess Beatrice asked questions about Hobart Pacha. Lady Ely told stories of his blockade running. "But," asked Prince Beatrice, "what is he—a Turk or an Englishman?" Lady Ely replied

he was an Englishman but was de-nationalized. "No," I said, "he couldn't be de-nationalized, there is no such thing." "But I say he was," replied Lady Ely. "But, my dear Jane, he couldn't be," said the Queen. "But he was, Your Majesty, for Lord Clarendon told me so, and if General Ponsonby will look at the Blue Books he will find it so." "But," I said, "how could he be de-nationalized when a fortnight ago —and as far as I know even at this moment—he is an officer in Your Majesty's Navy?" "Yes," said the Queen. "No," said Leopold, "that is simply a plan." So we all went at it hammer and tongs and eventually I am to ask Tenterden. It is, I know, one of the most difficult questions, but this of Hobart Pacha is a simple fact. Lady Ely implies that he was de-nationalized and she got him reinstated. She is mistaking his being turned out of the Navy—for de-nationalization. I see there is also McKillop Pacha and Morrice Bey—officers in our Navy who are employed by the Khedive. If Egypt is at war with Russia I don't see how they can remain on. I do wish I were with you.

To H. F. P.

May 24th, 1877.

Your letter about public affairs most interesting. I think Dizzy *crèvé* at the thought that although Gladstone may be represented as failing, yet the net result of his influence in the country was in the autumn to cause Lord Derby to write the Cross despatch to Turkey and now to

make Cross proclaim our neutrality, and it was really quite odd after the debate to see what a hush came over all the wild war talk. The fact is, Dizzy keeps her [the Queen] in a state of what the Roman Catholics call invulnerable ignorance.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, MY OWN ROOM,
August 30th, 1877.

The first minute's rest to-day must be devoted to answering two most deeply interesting letters. The Dean told me what you did about the friendship between B. and D. which makes it incredible the cock and bull stories the Queen has got hold of about the Derbys. When she is disagreed with, even slightly, she thinks nothing too bad to say of the culprit. Fortunately, if she changes, she forgets the former disagreement and the delinquent is restored to favour. I think it may very well happen that Dizzy, wishing to keep well with her, makes a cat's paw of Derby and professes himself to be obstructed by him when in reality he is rather glad of a moment's breathing time and wants to restrain the Queen. The *astounding* message you speak of, however, does not look like hesitation on his part. *Your* view that if we followed Layard's plan and bestowed our advice after sending an ultimatum to Russia neither side would take it, I believe to be true. *A propos* of Layard, I suppose he is in high favour; another case of caprice. I believe the caprice, prejudice and ignorance to be found in certain quarters to be unfathomable. Lytton, I think (as you do),

has got into a wrong view of thought, or rather of fear. He is rather apt to be eloquent about nothing and wishes, I dare say, to have a finger in the pie. I know Rawlinson is the greatest *gobe mouche* in existence, notwithstanding his oriental lore. I remember old Bedford being rather sharp at detecting that twenty years ago.

I really must take some steps about having my *Daily News* at Tollymore, because in these days it is impossible to live upon the *Belfast Herald*, or such like, once a week. What a most interesting letter I got this morning! So interesting that I read it and reread it without being able really to believe what I read. It appears to me to be simply incredible that B.[eaconsfield] should dare make her join him in a course unknown to the others. If the others joined it would still seem to me a very one-sided sort of affair, for the Russians would naturally say you have required nothing from the Turks before you give up your neutrality. Surely you must have terms for both sides. You owned the Turks required coercing, but you didn't wish to do it. Surely you don't expect us to hand everything back to their tender mercies, which we must do unless we are allowed to go on with the campaign—and then to do it without the knowledge of Parliament, or even of the Cabinet! Of course the Czar will think it nuts to divide the Queen and the Nation, and I believe the row raised in England will shake her popularity and Beaconsfield's Government more than she has an idea of. What does she mean about Lord D. letting it out? Of course it is to Russia's

interest to let it out on the very first occasion, to show how Lord B. and the Queen are intriguing, and get Germany on his [the Czar] side. I thought habit had made her more constitutional than to dream of such a thing. Nevertheless the interest, most absorbing, of your conversation with Wellesley remains. So very dear of you to write so fully. I am very careful of your letters.

To H. F. P.

TOLLYMORE,
Thursday, September 27th, 1877.

A welcome letter this morning announcing your arrival on Sunday. I wonder whether she will be annoyed at your being firm about going. I am glad Bids is Russian, or rather anti-Irish. I suppose the Queen never reads the *Times*, for it is even stronger about the authorities stopping the outrages than the *Daily News*. What a good French letter of Gladstone's to Negroponte! I had no idea he was such a good French scholar. I think Thiers's manifesto a most excellent *résumé* of the situation, and as the *Daily News* remarks, one is tempted to think the Conservative platitudes which the old chamber enacted and spoke really are so reactionary as to make one think the moderation overdone, and almost to wonder at a man like Thiers thinking it necessary to point out that these measures are not Radical. Yet, as Helps says somewhere, reiteration is necessary with fools (*i.e.* with Tories), otherwise their power of denial of plain facts is something surprising. I am afraid these Irish successes will

make England, or rather English "1,000" society, unbearable for years.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
1877.

Such a delightful letter again. Your account of the Queen's ideas about her Precedence amused me. I think her quite right about Hanover, but if she makes a struggle to be called Empress of India, it is sure to be thought to be connected with this row. I don't even see if Persia and Russia choose to play into each other's hands we need mind it much. Ned is taken up with the German discontent and is in furies rather about foreign politics, though rather feeble in his Eastern facts. However, I will say no more on the subject of the Eastern Panic since you have elected to say that none but imbeciles ever said what I heard not once, but a thousand times. Certainly your account of the doings with the Ameer does not read well for the Russians, but then I have always looked upon them as but one step removed from Barbarism. Perhaps it would be more true to say with Mill that whereas we are but halfway between civilisation and barbarism, they have only accomplished a quarter of the way. Did you see the account of Gladstone's life as reported by a Turkish newspaper? I think the article in the *Daily News* should be read by the Q., for when it says many Turcophiles in this country believe a great many things about Gladstone and the Jesuits, etc., quite as extraordinary as the pig

stealing *deterrède* by the Turks. Among the Turcophiles Her Most Gracious is foremost.

Canon H[ugh] P[earson] dined with me; he was most pleasant. He was very grave about the Church, saying that there was no doubt in his eyes that the broad Church party absorbed what there was of intelligence in the Church, but that they were unwilling to come forward and do battle (that is, I believe, though I don't say so to him, because of the intellectual compromise at the bottom of their position), but he went on to say the consequence was that so few obtained preferment or accomplished anything of a career and so the party was at a discount. Young men who would go into the Church, and were able and clever, changed their minds and made way for low church or high church nincompoops. This is one of his reasons for wishing she would make Stanley a Bishop or the Arch Bish. He and I both said Queen Elizabeth would have done it and saved the Church of England thereby, but the Queen never will.

This morning Stanley came to see me; he was most interesting, low at first and wanted stirring up, but then became very agreeable. His account of the silence of the Elgin family made me laugh, but is it that the Durham element has so annihilated the rest that there is nothing of the loquaciousness of the Bruces or the contradictiousness of the Greys to appear anywhere? He says Louisa Bruce is much the best, and when she gets away from her family talks enough, but he says young Lady Elgin he hears of as having

given way and now absorbed in the general silence. He had just come from Woburn where he had met the Ampthills, the Derbys, Dizzy, Henry Cowper, etc. He says the Duke was apparently devoted and absorbed in Dizzy's converse. The latter being in good health, capital spirits, and no trace of feebleness about him. This will be good news for H.M.

To H. F. P.

ST. JAMES'S,
Wednesday, April 14th, 1878.

We dined, or rather I dined, with Lady Stanley to meet Renan—the very ugliest man and the dirtiest I ever saw. He is very fat with a face like a toad, his nose squashed and full of holes, his teeth black and his hands filthy, *but* he was very pleasant. Stood up for Prince Napoleon, who, he said, was the ablest man in France but absolutely without ambition for himself; his thought centred in his sons. "Princesse Clothilde, [daughter of Louis Philippe and mother of King Ferdinard of Bulgaria], une sainte du 13ieme siècle," will not live in France unless received as a Princess or the Empress! He was astonishingly French in his love of picturesque situations without much in them, absolutely devoted to the past history of France and therefore hating the ugliness of the Present Regime. He said that, when he compares the vulgar ostentation of republican society with *la simple élégance* of the Duc D'Aumale's *milieu*, or the cultivated society at Prince Napoleon's, he cannot help it that socially he sympathises with the latter. Lyulph

[Stanley] said to me: "Utterly corrupt, like every conservative Frenchman." Lyulph gave me a programme which, I think, would have confirmed H.M.'s fears. He and Wright agreed the present House was two-thirds radical, not moderate Liberal. County franchise, redistribution of seats, municipal government the first measures. He puts disestablishment 50 years hence. Strong Peace Foreign Policy. I think none of these things will touch the Q., though they are all democratic measures.

From H. F. P. to M. E. P.

BALMORAL,
November 2nd, 1878.

Byng went away yesterday. He is, as Miss Pitt says, not an adventurous man. He is timid about advancing in any unknown direction, morally and physically, but he is not wanting in talk and occasionally in a certain dry humour, and, knowing everybody, is always a good companion. Sackville arrived in the evening. So did Sir John and Lady Clark. I suppose she had a cold or was unwell. At any rate, to E.'s surprise she sat at dinner with her unfolded napkin as a sort of notice she wanted nothing, and as she didn't eat she never ceased talking to him or to me. I don't think hers bad talk—there is always something in it, as well as in Clark, who gives one peeps at liberal ideas. But he is rather on a wrong scent, I think, in suggesting that our Government have prepared this Afghan crisis. He says the man at the bottom of it is Sir Henry Maine, who

inspired Sir L. Pelly with his ideas, and Clark heard Pelly say before the Peshawar conference that he would make the Afghans knuckle down. If Northbrook says that Salisbury tried to force on him a more aggressive frontier policy, it must be so, but Salisbury was always against this policy when he talked to me, and Burne* complained to me that Salisbury thwarted Lytton's bold ideas. Possibly he may have urged Northbrook to do more than he wished, and checked Lytton. The *Daily News* correspondence from Simla is very good and true. It is wonderful how they get the news. But it shows, I think, that our Government is not keen for war. However, I think war is now unavoidable. The Afghans are full of fight, and our Sikhs and others are equally pining for a row, and will force it on, even if our own people wish to hang back, which they don't. Your argument about the Afghan hating the Russian sounds plausible, but it is mistaken. The Russians will soon take Afghanistan, except what we take. I don't doubt that if a war occurs. If it don't and we, after all this tall talk, hang back, the Afghan will become completely Russian in feeling. This is only natural.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
November 5th, 1878.

I *do* think Dizzy has worked the idea of personal government to its logical conclusion, and the seed was sown by Stockmar and the Prince.

* Sir Owen Burne, Secretary Political Dept., India Office.

While they lived, the current of public opinion, especially among the Ministers, kept the thing between bounds, but they established the superstition in the Queen's mind about her own prerogative, and we who know her, know also perfectly how that superstition, devoid as it is of even a shadow of real political value, can be worked by an unscrupulous Minister to his advantage and the country's ruin. If there comes a real collision between the Queen and the House of Commons (say, for instance, that the country insists on Gladstone for the next Liberal Prime Minister) it is quite possible she would turn restive, *dorlotède* as she has been by Dizzy's high-sounding platitudes, and then her reign will end in a fiasco *or* she prepares one for the Prince of Wales; for I do think in a tussle of that sort, and I do hope and pray it should be so, that the People win the day.

To H. F. P.

PRISONS [NORMAN TOWER],
November 15th, 1878.

I must begin early to-day for fear of being stopped. I quite understand *now* the arrangement, my only remark being, I hope you will allow as little of the private secretary's work out of your hands as possible. How lovely a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity! and you, Edwards and the Queen seem to be a happy family just now, but as you say, *ne nous y fions pas.* I think Dufferin must have been quite refreshing, for there's nobody so pleasant; but I don't think

him right in saying Gladstone has no sense of the value of externals. I think he has quite a middle-class value for them, but he does not know exactly the way to put the value on to the right observance or ceremonial; but Lord Dufferin has rather a remarkable inclination for glitter. I mean it does not bore him as it would some real grand seigneurs or a first-rate intellectual man. The people who in England care least for the kind of show that Dizzy delights in, are of the Huxley or of the Duke of Somerset type. Below these, in both planes, I think there is a great love of it. I thought Stephen's letter excellent. I am so glad you sent it to me, for I want to read it again. I was almost convinced by it, but Lord Lawrence and Fawcett are more in my groove. Then there is the great leading misgiving that these people do not inspire one with any confidence, and I hate the way they calmly ignore the necessity for letting the country know anything of its own affairs. I cannot agree about Dizzy's speech—it is plausible but so poor. He intended to tell us nothing and certainly succeeded. I must proceed to domestic matters.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
1878.

I wish from the lining of my soul I was going to dine at home to-night, but I thought I must do the Deanery while the Eburys are there, so I said "Allons y!" You say, and I say, it is difficult to get out of this Afghan business, but that is what I complain of, the Government compromising the

country and then saying, "Oh, don't rake up the past. Let us get on a little, the next step is what signifies." Of course nothing would be such nuts to Bismarck as to get the Russians and English well by the ears in Asia, and then he would have the ground clear to disport himself in Europe as he wishes. I thought Laing's letter excellent. The *Fortnightly Review* is strong, talking of unintelligent and rampant militarism, but it is very odd that the intelligent soldiers as well as civilians condemn the recent policy in India and dread war.

Everard Primrose to M. E. P.

VIENNA, *Feb. 28th*, 1879.

MY DEAR MRS. PONSONBY,

Do not cast me off into the outer circle of your memory and so into weeping and gnashing of teeth. It would be such a pleasure to me to hear how you are.

Here I am surrounded by gaunt Roman-nosed Princesses, but no friends, and I miss all those I used to meet in England very sadly.

The first spectacle that presents itself to the intruder on entering Viennese Society is a bench of long, bony, black Majestic ladies—each with a goitre girthed with jewels—which ladies represent the august family of Lichtenstein. These are types of all the rest. They lift their aristocratic muzzles in the air, and like hounds sniff the coming stranger—they nod at him from their Olympus, but of conversation they have not a spark. Nobody talks here, some people may try a

little gossip—some gabble, but the frigid zone of no native mind is invaded by any warm current of intellectual ideas.

The old Princess Lichtenstein, I hear, was a sad falling off from the dignity of the house. When a Chaperone she used to fall asleep at balls, and her bare shoulders becoming cold, fancying herself in bed she used to clutch at her petticoats to draw them over her, thinking they were the bedclothes.

Give my very kind regards to the General and

Believe me to be,

Yours very faithfully,

EVERARD PRIMROSE.

M. E. P. to H. F. P.

AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES'S PALACE,
June 9th, 1879. *Monday Night*, 12.30.

I went to Mrs. Butler. Now I must be very accurate about all she said. First, that she was so surprised and overcome at being chosen that she quite feared at first to say she would paint two pictures, lest some unforeseen occurrence should prevent it, but upon consideration she wishes particularly to do it *quand même*. About price, she thinks if she made too great a reduction to obtain the honour she would not be respectful, as the Queen would like to be on a par with the rest of the world and to accept no favour, yet if the price were thought too large, she would gladly reduce to do what the Queen desires.

Inkerman was £2,500
Balaclava £3,500
& the last £4,500

Now she thinks if she went back to the price of the first, without the copyright it would be £1,000, then she would like to take £200 off for the honour of doing it for the Queen, so she desires me to ask you if £800 would be asking too much? Tell me also what you think. She intends it (the Zulu one) to be full of figures, and if the Zulus are to be got at she will make them sit. I have much more to say about her and her pictures, but I am tired, so shall put it into my next letter. I think £800 very reasonable, and that it would be rather *infime* to grind her down to less because it is the Queen. In fact, it ought to be the other way. However, sooner than forego it I think she would do it for less. She says the Queen has always shown such a peculiar and detailed interest in soldiers, not looking upon them as machines, as people do, that she particularly likes to think she is painting it for her. I thought her charming, so interesting in her talk and so simple about her talents. P. of Wales sent me his box for *Hernani* —quite wonderful—Miss Zimmer transfixed in my stall, and won over to Victor Hugo for the first time.

To H. F. P.

St. James's,
Friday, June 13th, 1879.

First about Mrs. Butler. I think I did not quite explain right. She said, taking her first successful picture, £1,000 without copyright would be the price, but she particularly wishes to mark her sense of the honour, by doing it for the Queen for £800. I remarked, if she put the price at

£1,000 it was still lowering it according to her *last* prices, but that, she said, she did not mind. She wanted to consult you—she felt if she pitched it too low it would be an impertinence, and £800 would be a sum nobody could say was too dear or too cheap.

The Prince of Wales sent me his box again yesterday. Even if suggested by Arthur Ellis, I think it very kind with all London clamouring; my party was Self, Betty, Ladies, Albert Grey and Lord Roden young men. We adjourned in the room at the back for ices and coffee. *Gendre de* Mr. Poirier excellent, but not up to the Bressant *carte*. Delaunay is just a little too *dégagé* and modern. Betty delighted—Ned and Emily in their stalls.

To-day I drew all the morning and had a very long committee—Employment of Women. We received a deputation from the City Guilds, who explained they wished to spend £200 a year on technical classes for girls, besides paying salaries for teachers, and wished us to accept another hundred a year for odds and ends, so we are looking up. To-night had tickets for *Phèdre* again—most thrilling.

Everard Primrose to M. E. P.

FONDA DE PARIS, MADRID,
November 30th, 1879.

MY DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

A letter I got a few days ago from Roden makes me rather uneasy: he says that he has had a very bad cough—has not been out of doors this last week—and speaks of being peremptorily

ordered off to Mentone by Jenner, that place being preferred to Cannes. This looks terribly like the beginning of the end—and I have been very sad with the idea of some crisis impending, or at least of some newly developed change. And my thoughts become the gloomier from the memories evoked by this place—where ten years ago we spent so joyous a time together—life seeming radiant to him then, and his spirits proportionally exuberant and fresh. I wish I had the chance of seeing him before he leaves England —but it appears he is off at once—and I cannot leave all the functions and compliments it is my business to attend here before Wednesday.

The fêtes have been very splendid and very successful, though perhaps they have not called out as much crowd or enthusiasm as on the occasion of the first wife. But there have been coaches and six—and *panaches* and liveries and gay cavaliers and bands and diamonds and gold lace enough to content any public mind and to astonish that of the Britons generally accustomed to the wicker-work landau and dingy kilts of their own Imperial equipages. The French Ambassador's coachman between fat and emotion fainted away on his hammercloth and had to be ministered to by attachés before his Excellency could advance. The British Ambassador*—as far as military renown and decorations go—is beyond criticism, but he is a man slow of speech, and in matters of etiquette or the French language like a baby. He

* Lord Napier of Magdala, Governor of Gibraltar and Special Ambassador at the wedding of the King Alphonso XII.

is assisted by two worthy gentlemen from his garrison whose experiences and linguistic abilities are as scanty as his own. I overheard the A.D.C. instructing an hidalgo in these words—"vous putterez cette lettre dong the mang of Monsoo le baron!"—and consequently much work falls on me. One small difficulty to surmount is to poke Lord Napier on in the right path and repress his Pickwickian desire to accost and salute every high-born dame he meets—for etiquette is strict in these points in Spain. You should see that august monarch (late of Spain), Queen Isabella—her leers, her smiles, her curtseys are indeed surprising—yet I believe she is most fascinating on acquaintance, a privilege I was unable to enjoy, as Her English Majesty's representative was only able to ejaculate the name of Primrose some minutes after the opportunity for an introduction had passed by. The Princess of Girginti is very plain—and her sisters are scarcely prettier—but they are all cheery and intelligent—while the King himself is almost irreverent in his behaviour and jokes. It was a mistake sending the Governor of Gibraltar to Madrid, for there is still a sore—and the individuality was well known—but we have been spared the rotten eggs we expected—and on the whole have been courteously received. The Minister of State said, however, "We will be happy to see Lord Napier as a soldier and a distinguished man"—but without any reference to any other function.

Yours sincerely,

E. PRIMROSE.

Everard Primrose to M. E. P.

MENTMORE, LEIGHTON BUZZARD,
December 20th, 1879.

MY DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

The functions at Madrid were really extremely imposing, and the numerous processions seemed cut out of Van de Meulen's pictures. Queen Isabella asked with much effusion after the Empress at Windsor "qui a été toujours si bonne pour moi" and after the Empress at Chislehurst "qui a toujours eu les mêmes gouts que moi", by which her most Christian Majesty merely meant an attachment to country life, but it sounded startling.

I understand that in Paris Isabella has sold all the keys of the towns in Spain, which, highly wrought and jewelled, were presented to her on various progresses during her reign, as well as the crown of her most celebrated and revered namesake, which was given her by the town of Granada.

You seem to have had gay military doings at Windsor. General Higginson is very unhappy at not having been commanded to be present, but he has the fewer objections, as not even the Duke of Cambridge attended the ceremony. It strikes outsiders and simple soldiers as rather remarkable that on so august an occasion as the reception of [General] Crealock and other warriors in "the fold of a most distinguished order" neither the Commander-in-Chief assisted nor was the chief of the district even allowed in an adjoining anteroom.

You may also imagine better than I describe Mr. Fred Marshall's sentiments and expressions, which assumed such proportions as to lead to a breach between Gloucester House and Eaton Place.

I go on Monday to Battle, a damp clay hill which in winter is far from a cheerful or exhilarating residence; but I do not either look on this mansion, magnificent and uncomfortable as it is, as very attractive or cheerful; indeed it ought to be shown to penniless younger sons as a wholesome corrective of envy, in some such analogous a way as Helots were exhibited to the rising youth of Sparta.

One advantage Mentmore has, and that is, all the beautiful objects with which it is stuffed are all really genuine and of perfect taste—but see how irrational and difficult are some people's wishes! Amid Venetian furniture, brocades and gilded thrones, tables of tarsia and tortoiseshell, Gobelins hangings and the spoils of Fontainebleau and the Trianon, one sighs for an old armchair, a drugget one need not hesitate to tread on, and a table which will conveniently hold something.

Yours with many good wishes,

E. P.

To H. F. P.

April 15th, 1880.

Most interesting letter again. The strength of the Queen's position lies in the fact that so many people would be relieved if she exerted her prerogative and refused Gladstone. There is nothing

but tradition in the necessity of her sending for him. She has been clever; she wrote to Helena and said that she meant to act exactly as the Constitution of the Country required, etc., etc. This letter was shown to Mrs. Stanley, who showed it to Lady S., hence to Lyulph [Stanley, afterwards Lord Sheffield], who saw in it a check-mate. Nobody can force her to send for a man who has constantly declared he would not return to office and who, moreover, is not recognised leader of the Opposition. I think the situation is *more* than difficult unless Gladstone is poisoned; in or out of office he must *tell*, and I cannot conceive anything more difficult for Granville. Lyulph said it is rumoured she will resign, but she *won't*. Balmoral or Osborne on a competence and obscurity are too much for her to *envisager*. She will no more be remembered than the Sultan who committed suicide, and the Prince of Wales is coquetting with the Rads. What does he care about County Franchise, so long as he gets his Civil lists?

Sir William Harcourt to M. E. P.

SECRETARY OF STATE HOME DEPT.,
August 13th, 1880.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

Don't be afraid. Our "forward policy" is right. London and Society and "well-informed people" are against us, but they are always wrong, as they were at the last Election and would be to-morrow if there was another. The country is with us. I study the provincial

papers, which are a much better barometer than the London journals. The former are with us and against the Tory obstructionists.

By firm and steady perseverance we shall carry all our Bills and yet finish in August.

If we had shut up shop after the defeat of the Irish measure, we should have finished disgracefully, now shall return with flags flying and drums beating.

Our steady infantry of the line, which are very loyal to us, are by degrees overcoming the Tory sharpshooters. And the Lords have had their Barabbas. They can't throw out any more Bills and they will now pass anything we send up to them, even Hares and Rabbits, though it is a bitter pill. It is hard work for the time, but the determination we have shown will bear good fruit and teach the Tories that the tactics they have pursued this Session are unavailing in the face of a mobile Government.

What a significant division last night, when the Clergy could only muster 79 votes to defend their darling Church Yards from the desecration of a Dissenter!

Yours very sincerely,
W. V. HARCOURT.

Everard Primrose to M. E. P.

KRONSTADT,
October, 1880.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

Nothing could have succeeded better than my tour through Transylvania up to now—

and it would be difficult to do justice to the hospitality I have received here. "Bracebridge Hall" would not be an exaggeration if Washington Irving had built his fancy in this neighbourhood. I am literally taken possession of. My route is planned out by indigenous experiences with the view of suiting my purposes with the available houses. I am sent from one magnate to another without any conscious volition—carriages are secured for me, peasants are paraded with their household gods, cellars are thrown open to my taste, and in short mine to a humble degree is really a progress, and far pleasanter a one than that which entails uniforms, deputations and addresses. And the Hospitality is of the real kind. The visitor is the person whose comfort and convenience are studied, not the host, and he is not solicited to stay, however anxious the country monotony of his entertainers may desire it, when once it is appreciated that his business is to be off and doing. It is amusing these experiences of country house life.

At breakfast the Frau Gräfin sits before a teapot and three large bowls of buffalo milk, and ladles your requirements into the cup she hands you. After every dinner we shake hands all round with enthusiasm and gratitude. Perhaps the only drawback is being always *en évidence*—civility demands that a host should always be with his guests, and Society palls on one when given from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. I went for a day to Sinaia, not the birthplace of the decalogue, but a romantic little nest of villas in Roumania where the Boyards

come to gamble and make love. Prince Charles [of Roumania] also goes there to play duets with his wife, and his faithful subjects are much bored by the eternal practice of Her Highness's arpeggios which echo across the narrow valley.

What an odd thing it is to reflect that this Sovereign only 14 years ago had to be smuggled through Vienna in the travesty of a valet to his present Prime Minister and take possession of his throne! If they can bully with impunity, the Austrians never forget, and, always keeping alive their repugnance to Prince Charles, they are teasing the poor Roumanians with their pretensions for the regulation of the Danube. I believe the "Drei Kaiserbund" is really re-established on the basis of a new arrangement of the Balkan Peninsula. We have to thank the present action of the Cabinet for this. Their absurd naval demonstrations and hazardous terrorism excite both ridicule and pity in this country, when in recollection of the events of 1849 the very name of Russia is sufficient to enflame conversation.

You should get and read the *Nouvelle Revue* for June and July; it contains very remarkable disclosures from the Grand Duke Constantine on the late Russo-Turkish war, and has given reason for a split between him and the Czarevitch.

I understand there are not so many Russians in Bulgaria as have been made out. In all the proper estimate would be under 2,000—but Prince Alexander, after reviewing his Militia at Schumla, telegraphed to the Czar expressing his satisfaction at the result and assuring him all the troops and

THE QUEEN, WITH ARTHUR PONSONBY AS PAGE, ABOUT 1882.

the officers sent to instruct them were working zealously for the common *patrie*. So humble was the despatch it might have been the report of an inferior officer to his colonel.

Yours faithfully,
EVERARD PRIMROSE.

Everard Primrose to M. E. P.

1, LOBKOWITZ PLATZ, VIENNA,
March 15th, 1881.

From the thrilling sensations of the Viennese salon, one which my colleagues think me lucky in penetrating, I must tear myself away to have the pleasure of writing to you, dear Lady Ponsonby. It is an age since last I heard of you, and it was a very sad disappointment to me to have to leave London without catching even a sight of you. I leave my salon gaily for the purpose. The limited circles of the Viennese world do not ripple or widen from the splash of any great intellectual excitement.

Imagine, for example, a long table spread with oranges, cigarettes, barley sugar and a samovar. On one side are two or three elderly ladies with a decorous general. On the other a few septuagenarians are stupidly playing with strings of beads or weaving puzzles out of wirework. Conversation is languid, for the same party met yesterday, the day before, and the day before that, and will meet again an hour hence at a similar coterie. And also talk rather dries up from the absence of other topics than the babies of one Countess,

the dress of another, or the want of deportment of a third. The Italian Ambassadress, wishing to be amiable and give out that she had children's parties every week, has been so unlucky as to tell the mother of a family that her children were "at home" every Friday. This has been discussed all the evening and is held quite unwarrantable presumption, while the only other event of interest that has occurred is an Hungarian magnate having fainted in the presence of Majesty from his pelisse having been too tightly laced. Yet the Emperor of Russia* *has* been murdered and the state of Europe is grave enough to occupy at least a whole evening. I think, however, people have been a little moved by this last tragedy, as much, perhaps, as they can be moved by anything in a Society where death makes but a slight impression.

There was a Greek Mass sung to-day for the repose of the Emperor Alexander's soul at which all the Court was present in its bravest attire. The Russians are very unfortunate, for even during this ceremony a contretemps happened, a chandelier gave way on the chief cook's head and bespattered that official's gold stomach with wax. As for the temper shown by the other dignitaries when lighted tapers were thrust into their hands by the Pope to drip on their kerseymere finery, it was, to say the least, little reverent.

I have been much concerned about Lady Holland, who wrote me word she has been seriously laid up with bronchitis and neuralgia. One must always feel anxious for her in the hands

* Alexander II. Murdered on March 13th.

of her servants and at the mercy of Neapolitan doctors, whose one remedy for fever is starvation on orangeade, and who nearly electrified poor Ctess. Yarnac out of the world altogether.

Pray give me news of yourself and the General. You must be having, indeed, a busy and anxious time in England, but I trust the occupations of interest have been able to divert your mind from sadder thoughts.

Yours faithfully,
E. PRIMROSE.

To H. F. P.

AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES'S PALACE,
Thursday, June 9th, 1881.

Well, we had our party last night, and W. Harcourt was very proud of the Coalition between Royalties and Radicals. It was a very small party, but included some advanced and fusty-looking Liberals with a sprinkling of pleasant ones, and of Duchesses. I talked to Lowell and Chamberlain, who was convinced his Speech would do for him with H.M. I told him it was quite refreshing not to hear half-hearted platitudes of the opportunist kind. This got in on Gambetta, whom he believes in. For instance, he said, "What's restraint in a man, who is much more a master of men there, than this one [H.R.H]. here, never to assert himself, and always efface himself before the republic." I quite agreed *pourvu que cela dure.* Somehow Frenchmen are so uncertain that one is always on the look-out for personal vanity, and the necessary reaction,

though it is true that each wave brings the tide up to a higher level in spite of the receding which catches one's eye.

Prince of Wales very cordial—insisting on my going to the French and German play—carrying in his head all the nights his Box was engaged. Finally he has given it to me for Saturday afternoon.

The news from Ireland is worse, and I wonder we don't sit in sackcloth and ashes instead of amusing ourselves. I haven't read the paper yet (except Irish column), so more politics to-morrow.

We shall just be leaving Windsor as you arrive. You must come here.

To H. F. P.

AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES'S PALACE,
June 13*th*, 1881.

Your letter about Goschen most interesting—I think very little would make W. Harcourt throw over the Radicals. So Lord Derby, Goschen, W. Harcourt, Hartington might be the foundation of a strong Government. I doubt the country standing the overthrow of the Rads, but Bright is an old man and Chamberlain and Dilke will not be the same men when he retires. Just received a message from the Prince offering me his German box for to-morrow, and Fred Cadogan came with a French play box for to-night, so my friends are very thoughtful, but I really go to Windsor to-morrow, and to-night with the Binghams.

To Lord Ronald Gower

Brother of the then Duke of Sutherland.

NORMAN TOWER,
November 27th, 1882.

DEAR LORD RONALD,

My prison on Sunday morning, with a great deal of bleak bright light from without, and the red glow of a roaring wood fire within, a sense of shelter from the bitter east wind, which one hears beating against the Castle walls, a thorough belief in the piety of Courtiers, which will leave me unmolested for at least two or three hours—all this goes to make up a *milieu* from whence the pleasure of answering your letter is even greater than usual.

We have been very military here, and the different sights have been worth seeing, if it were not for the rather uncomfortable "Much ado about nothing" feeling at the bottom of one's heart. That feeling again wears off when there is so little swagger among soldiers about it all. The very rush made by the Officers to get into plain clothes, and drive quietly away from any reception, *if they could*, was interpreted by the Germans as shame for the ridiculous smallness of the affair, whereas the case would have been the same if they had Bismarck and old William to parade about as prisoners.

Then the giving away of the Medals *—the Reception of the Indians, who insisted upon doing homage in their own way—that is, by making the Queen touch the hilts of their swords—the

* On the return of the troops from Egypt.

embrace of the Duke of Connaught—all this in the Quadrangle was really picturesque. I am a very bad sight-seer, but I was delighted to look at those Indians with their rhythmical step, so unlike drill, yet perfectly fulfilling the purposes of drill, without its stupidity; grave, reserved faces, but with possibilities of passion in the expression, intensely interesting.

Sir Garnet showed me one old warrior, who upon being asked how his people were, said—"Well, my grandson has just killed his two men" (as I might have said mine were put in the 5th form). "And what number of men have you killed?" "69, principally relations!" They are revolted, I hear, by the quantity of beef, etc., consumed by our men, so in the corridor grapes and lemons (the only things they would eat) were served out to them.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
May 1st, 1882.

The death of the Dean [Connor] will have surprised nobody, but I think it is very sad for them all, as they know nobody here.* The wishes of the place centre in Butler, but I suppose that is impossible, though Gladstone is willing, I believe. Blunt, Davidson or Boyd Carpenter? I shall be curious to know which.

Charlie Wood and Liddon (what a Dean he would be!) looked in at ten minutes to 8 and dined with us last night, a most agreeable dinner, so

* He had only been Dean four months.

SIR HENRY PONSONBY, 1883.

wise and temperate and just Liddon is, expressing himself so well without a bit of affectation.

To H. F. P.

Norman Tower, Windsor Castle.

I have had to write budgets to Georgy and Emily, who wrote me full accounts of the Crown Princess's visit which seems to have been a success altogether. She wrote me a very nice letter. I send it to you that you may see what she says of Radolinski. I don't think the Queen realises what an extraordinary state of things exists in Germany in the way of espionage and intrigue. They, the Foreign Office, which means Bismarck, wanted to put a man of their own about the Crown Princess so as more effectually to control the Crown Prince when he becomes Emperor. Seckendorff refused to play the spy, and although being opposed to the Crown Princess in politics would not lend himself to this intrigue. They began by dismissing his brother, after twenty years' service, from the Foreign Office without any reason being given. They then appointed Radolinski with orders to get rid of Seckendorff. Radolinski furthered, or appeared to further, the Crown Princess's views about Bulgaria and ingratiated himself into her good graces and then began the undermining of Seckendorff. I think Seckendorff is to blame for his dictatorial manner, and she may have made him, as is the wont of the family, too much "the indispensable one," but I feel convinced on the whole that he is being

got rid of under false pretences, for Radolinski's manner of defending the Crown Princess simply consists of spreading these reports and in trying to detach her own family from her. I must dress. The girls seem very happy, quite alone at Flete.

From Everard Primrose

Moscow,
June 7th, 1883.

My dear Lady Ponsonby,

The coronation fêtes are at their end, and I depart in peace for the Caucasus to-morrow. My eyes quite ache with sights, and my invention refuses further descriptions.

Nothing short of the colours of the rainbow mounted with the treasury of an Inca can give any adequate idea of the gorgeous ceremonies of the past week. The order was perfect and the indecorous struggle at our own small Royal drawing-rooms was conspicuous by its absence at these massive entertainments where people are received and fed by thousands.

It was a great time for tailors and silversmiths, every coat was new and the processions alone were opened by 150 gentlemen each arrayed in the glory of a Solomon. The blaze of jewels was astonishing. The Archduchess from Austria glittered like the spray of a beautiful fountain, the Grandduchess Constantine could scarcely support the weight of countless precious stones, while Princess Kotzoubey wore a wig of pearls.

The Empress stands the great fatigue wonderfully, but in slippers, as her feet now refuse to

fit any properly sized shoe. It must be no joke to carry five yards of ermine and some lbs. of diamonds during several hours—while metallic popes drone and shuffle and wave candles and fling incense and bellow, yet this is what Majesty was expected to do while being crowned and anointed.

For the first time one realises the picture of toy books and playing cards and saw Royalty crowned, robed, sceptered and orbed. The gracious Victoria, alas! is generally seen in a somewhat unattractive bonnet.

The illuminations are lustrous; I have rarely seen anything more beautiful than this oriental picturesque town outlined in flame and aglow with the varied hues of Bengal fire. The great tower of the Kremlin was cased with a filagree of electric lamps and shone as the pillar of fire may have done in the desert.

Wolseley is a great success, he holds a kind of *levée* whenever he appears, and his urbanity is indefatigable. Clanwilliam is rather morose, it is such a waste of time, says he; now what has he to do?

General relief is expressed that everything has passed off without a hitch, but there is great disappointment about the ukase. It is an empty document giving back to people some old debt which could never have been collected and promising nothing. I cannot help thinking that the slight disturbances in St. Petersburg the other day took their origin in this disappointment, though the astute Russian swears they were only due to excess of loyalty.

I hope to be in Vienna at the end of this month, but my programme of journey includes Kars and the Crimea, and may take me a month to carry out.

Yours ever,

E. PRIMROSE.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
September 1st, 1884.

I forgot to tell you that both Seckendorff and Perpignan spoke to me about the Crown Princess's Bulgarian proclivities. Seckendorff said she wants to effect the marriage [of her daughter Victoria to Prince Alexander of Bulgaria], so as to get power in the East. I think her mistaken, but even if she were not, she ought not to employ second- and third-rate agents, and fancy Bismarck does not know what she is about. Why do they always try to get their way by such roundabout methods? The Prince of Wales thinks he deceives the Crown Princess, and she is convinced she blinds the Prince of Wales.

Perpignan, I saw, was not in favour—Vicky trying on the Queen's method of saying she (Mlle. de Perpignan) was altered, ill, and soured, since her mother's death, difficult to deal with, etc. I knew the symptoms—probably P. had disagreed with her Royal Mistress. She spoke to me on board the yacht—I said I could see the Princess's view. Princess Victoria is a sort of Scandinavian woman, who would like to throw herself *dans le mouvement* in a wild country.

To H. F. P.

AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES'S PALACE,
October 13th, 1884. *Monday*, 8 *a.m.*

The *Saturday Review* is very clever and biting this week, but does all it can to write down any attempt at peace by twitting the Liberals about their evident desire to cave in. I rather agree with the reviler about Chamberlain's speech—it puts my back up as the political jingoism of "we are the strongest" argument provokes me more than military chauvinisme, besides it was purposely an inflammatory speech, and there is something so common and vulgar in stirring up a crowd by personal abuse that it disgusts all educated people, and I think he loses very much by it. He was better on the general *donnée* that it was a battle between progress and privilege. Salisbury's position in the long run would be stronger if he answered, "No, it is a strife between culture and anarchy." The majority are *not* always right. Why are we to suppose that the aggregate are infallible when we can clearly prove that the opinions of a great number of the individuals who compose that aggregate are valueless? However, the principle of the extension of the franchise has been conceded long ago, and whatever he may think, Salisbury is right perhaps in not doing battle once more in a losing cause.

To H. F. P. 1885.

I never read anything so miserable, decrepit, effete, wordy and prevaricating as the rigmarole

Gladstone was pleased to call his statement. Why couldn't he say clearly in few words what orders the Government had given Wolseley, at least those he chose to tell, and then pay some sort of tribute to Gordon instead of the half-hearted words, "the lamented General Gordon," like one of those little funeral cards with an urn, so ungenerous, then not one word of the army's excellence. Lord Granville was weak, but tolerable and very cordial in his praise of the soldiers. The worst of Lord Salisbury is that he goes back into praise and regret of the Beaconsfield Policy, and this, I think, the country will not stand. Of course the strong position of the Government lies in the weakness of their opponents, who really have nobody but Salisbury, and the House of Lords is so useless. I wonder when you are coming up ?

To H. F. P.

Wednesday, April 22nd, 1885.

The morning news gives a rather alarming account to-day. I hope Ned's view may be right. He says Bismarck is the man who will decide, and he dares not advise war because the whole of Germany is flooded with Russian bonds and the Germans would feel the war in their pockets even more than the Russians. When I think of the Soudan expedition, "bitter and burning indignation" are weak words. If there was a doubt about going to Khartoum before Gordon's death and the destruction of the garrison, what in

the name of Heaven induced Mr. Gladstone to announce the taking of Khartoum as *the* one thing in the whole campaign which could not be given up! There never was a case where a man said to be a visionary by *soi-disant* practical men proved by his prophecies how much greater was his knowledge than theirs of the nature of the task they had before them. He said, "Your weakness will prove the Mahdi's strength." It is a miserable rebellion, and if understood could be disposed of rapidly and surely.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE,
October 13th, 1885.

I have tons to say on the Crown Princess question and on the speeches. I think Morier very much given to exaggeration and extremely *gobe mouche*. This does not prevent the account he has given you from being very interesting. When I was staying with the Crown Princess at Osborne Cottage, Seckendorff spoke to me for an hour one day about her. He said he need not explain to me what her qualities were, but that her imprudences were much to be regretted because they led her into such indirect paths, so that Bismarck for one was always on the look out and thought she was intriguing when she wasn't. Seckendorff of course might have been lying all this time and throwing dust into my eyes, but *à quoi bon?* He wanted her to speak openly to the Crown Prince and even Bismarck

about Bulgaria, instead of working in the dark. I think she is less under S.'s thumb than Morier thinks. She certainly snubbed him the day she was here. I am very sorry she is so unpopular, but as I said before, I think he exaggerates. She thinks him *faiseur d'embarras* and vain, both of which he is.

From Albert Grey

Afterwards 4th Earl Grey, a son of General Grey, Private Secretary to the Queen.

HOWICK,
December 20th, 1885.

MY DEAR MARY,

Delighted to see your handwriting again. Have just returned from London.

I left Brooks in a state of bubble over the *Pall Mall* Declaration of Gladstone's Home Rule intentions. I am exceedingly interested to find that your impressions and information square so completely with mine. I have not read *Parnellism*, but I will. I find somebody has sent it to me. C—— is a drunken blackguard, and when his tongue is unloosed by wine it wags indiscreetly. It was therefore necessary for Parnell to get rid of him. To enable him to do this he was forced to go to the Invincibles, not being strong enough to beat C—— who had the Fenian support off his own bat. The Invincibles, *i.e.* the Dynamite and Physical Force Party, gave Parnell their support on condition that he would take a candidate of their choosing, and I believe there is no doubt that the man they have forced

upon him, N——, is a tip-top 1st class genuine Murderer.

The Louth Election is no triumph for Parnell. The return of C—— would have been a severe blow to his prestige and he could not allow it. He has, however, in turning him out made a deadly enemy of an unscrupulous ruffian who knows more than Parnell likes, and even though *Parnellism* may be full of lies, it cannot fail to do harm to Parnell, for the suspicion that it is written by C—— will draw universal attention to it, and this is the very thing we loyalists want.

It seems to me that under the guidance of that self-deluding, People deluding, Grand Old Man the Liberal Party will once more shut its eyes and refuse to see evident facts.

Notwithstanding his electoral triumph, I believe Parnell's position has never been so dangerous as it was just before the Hawarden Feeler was put out—and if English Statesmen had sat tight and refused to budge one inch beyond that policy which aims at equality of treatment in all matters of Political Privileges on both sides of St. George's Channel, Parnell would have come to the ground.

For the kernel of the Irish Problem lies in this, that the Irish people on whose support Parnell depends for his power are not the wretched Landgrabbing Robbers, but the Fenians, who will be satisfied with nothing short of such a measure of Home Rule as gives them absolute control over the Military as well as the Police and full and complete legislative independence.

Now the Fenians are, notwithstanding Parnell's majority, beginning to suspect Parnell. I am told by my friends in Ireland that the Fenians, who are anxious for Separation, are beginning to tire of the present unrest in Ireland and wish to bring about a National Uprising of the Irish Democracy in the belief that the British Democracy will forbear to put them down.

Parnell was to have had one more session allowed in which by his Parliamentary action he was to bring about the separation; if he failed he and his Colleagues were to withdraw and the Rebellion to be proclaimed. Parnell was, in fact, between the devil and the deep sea. My fear is that Gladstone's unfortunate ambition has lifted Parnell out of a dilemma. Parnell accepts the Gladstone Plan with his tongue in his cheek, and we are placed on a slope which must precipitate us into separation.

Please tell me what you hear. I am most anxious about Spencer and Hartington; I feel confident about Goschen, but I am doubtful about the other.

There seem to me to be only two Policies, the Policy of Equal Treatment, and the Policy of Separation. I am ready to shoulder the rifle and fight against the Separatists if need be, but I did not anticipate that the first battle would have to be fought not against Parnell but against the blind old man and his blind-folded followers. Harcourt will, I suppose, in any case go for the Policy which lands him again in office, but Hartington; what will he do? He is bound by

all his speeches to stand firm: but his past performances make this so improbable that I hardly dare hope it. This, however, is the biggest crisis in his life, and he has shown a power of rising to emergencies, and I still believe in him. Do tell me what you hear.

I am afraid I have not told you much; there is no chance of a coalition at present, absolutely none, but the drift of events is that way, I believe. All I look forward to at present is to smash that old Idol Dagon, which unless Satan claims him for his own we shall by the grace of God and our good votes do before the end of May.

Yours affectionately,

A. GREY.

To H. F. P.

NORMAN TOWER, WINDSOR CASTLE.

I am going to dine at the Deanery to-night, so must write my letter in the afternoon. Yesterday the service at St. George's was really beautiful, entirely on what I call the distinctive feature of the English Communion Service—the link in the Communion between living and dead Christians of the same faith—the Communion of Saints—if all mystery is taken out of the idea, it becomes most prosaic, and quite, as Mr. Avery says, "the dead letter," but I see the beauty of the chain binding mysteriously those in Communion with each other and with Christ. I see the beauty, but the supernatural is always difficult for me to accept, though not more so than any other part

of the Christian Creed, which after all implies a series of supernatural events. Certainly, the English service at its best is wonderfully dignified. The chapter out of the Book of Wisdom, about those who had done great things, and thought great thoughts—then the picture of Christian life out of St. Paul, and such an Anthem—"Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes," etc. I never heard it before. I stayed for the Communion.

I am afraid you will say it was a kind of protest against your joining the Scotch Church! I am glad you had not to yield, for I don't like a many-sided faith—I would rather have none.

I read your letter on my way to Browning's [Oscar Browning, a Master at Eton] class, which certainly eases one's idea about the French Revolution. The Physical Science was most interesting. Helena is annoyed because they won't alter the hour for her, but we get the theatre and apparatus rather *en cachette*, so we must not ask to upset the Eton hours, or everything will be stopped. As it is, Hornby [Headmaster, and afterwards Provost of Eton] is against us, and had up Browning to reprimand him for giving History lectures. Browning said, as it was in his leisure moments, he must decline to make any alteration. Hornby does not dare tackle Hale, who is older and more liked than himself.

From Queen Victoria

OSBORNE,
January 11th, 1886.

DEAREST MARY,

I send you here the correspondence with Mrs. Gladstone, which will amuse you. Please observe that her envelope is one of the Office ones!

What you told me last night gave me much hope and *encouragement*, for really it would be too sinful to create a violent crisis *without the slightest hope* of success on the part of Mr. Gladstone —only ruining him *still more* (for his last Government was a terrible fiasco—not to speak of the mischief he did) and making his last years obliterate the earlier ones—in the eyes of the world and posterity. Every one who wishes to *prevent this* for his own sake, and still more from a real feeling of patriotism, and I must say Loyalty (for what have I not to suffer?) should try and do anything they can to advise and urge him to retire. I wish you would indirectly.

Ever Yours affectionately,

V. R. I.

To H. F. P.

AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES'S PALACE.
[? 1886].

I began a letter in the train but it was too draughty, dark and odious to go on with. I found a most interesting letter from you and it touches upon all my points, so I will tell you of my visit to Hawarden and make the rapprochements with your news afterwards. We had rather a stormy drive, and regardless of Lady Lyttelton, who was

very hot on Gladstone's side, we quarrelled all the way with Mr. Flower, who was avowedly going to pick *Herbert* Gladstone's brains. We found Mrs. G. (of course) all gush and hoping her letter to the dear Queen would not be too late. Mr. and Mrs. Wickham, Helen Gladstone. The eldest son and Herbert—he came in to luncheon and then we went into what they call the Temple of Peace—*i.e.* his library, on one side his political table, on the other his literary, which he said he greatly preferred, and, rather a touching sight, that terrible picture of the Queen with the bust of Pr. Cons. in the middle of the room, Mrs. G.'s writing-table with a small bust of the Queen at the end of the room. The rule is, the first time you go into the room you may speak, but afterwards dead silence is enforced. I thought we were going to speak of *des riens* and then go, when Mrs. G. slipped out of the room—Betty absorbed in books at the other end—the coast was free, he took up that map of Ireland all of which is painted in Nationalist colours except a little Tory triangle at the top (you know it).

The following letters refer mainly to the Queen's Jubilee present, which ultimately was the foundation of the Queen's Jubilee Nurses.

To H. F. P.

AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES'S PALACE,
1887.

Lady Cork and Lady Spencer arrived *munies* with two letters from you, from which I have copied these two extracts. They say this new

Committee, ignoring and over-riding all they have done because of the unpopularity of one of the propositions, have passed this measure. Lady Cork has been for the present all along, but worked the thing on the lines indicated by you. The same line was taken up by Alice Strafford. The old executive went to every Committee, bore the heat and brunt of the day, attended every Committee, worked the matter out. Lady Cork passed, seconded by Lady Spencer, the statue. They collected between them something like £10,000, and then the others swoop in.

I went to Lady Salisbury; she was *much* more violent than Lady Cork; I let her spend her excitement. Lady Margaret Beaumont had told her Lady Cork had said she would leave the Committee if Lady S. were appointed. I pretended to ignore the political argument. I said some rumour of political bias was afloat, but nobody with two ideas could say anything so silly—that I did not believe Lady S. had ever listened to such a thing. I pooh-poohed the importance of the protective scheme, said it was too local, would fall of itself, if it had been left alone. Lady S. said she would report the Whig ladies to the Queen. I said it would be easy to draw up a report, stating what each lady had *done* (Lady S. has done *nothing*), and that I was sure you would not disown the Committee. We parted very good friends, and I *think* I did good.

Lady Cork and Lady Spencer say will you look at paragraph in *Times* or *Morning Post*, saying the fresh Committee have decided the surplus is

to be presented to the Queen unconditionally, and they say you have written two letters to Lady Cork to say the Queen refused to accept a sum of money. As to another present, the Committee have announced to the country at large that a charity would be the way in which the surplus should be spent. The fact of the Queen choosing her present now will be a great charge upon her, and you *must* stand by your orders to Lady Cork. What will you do ? I am going to Lady Salisbury.

To H. F. P.

April 14th, 1890.

It appears I was rather out of order summoning the Committee (at Lady R.'s request) to St. James without telling Peile [the Chairman], who writes to tell me he is coming.

I want to work back with you to Rathbone and Bonham Carter,* the latter did not mind Rathbone's spending the money on the nurses. He said the net result was that till the difficulty in the wording of the charter was removed—Rathbone passing, settling and appointing so many nurses nominally at his expense—the net result was that the *first* Queen's nurses were in fact Rathbone's, and what security was there that St. K. could continue this after their money was exhausted ?

My preoccupation is that all the money being divided between these institutions there is nothing left for a nucleus which might in time at St. K. or elsewhere be the Q.V.J.N. *par excellence.* If this were established, *then* a uniform (mine is

* Alfred Bonham Carter, referee of private bills, H. of C.

blue check linen gown, dark blue serge cloak, straw bonnet and blue ribbon), in short, Jubilee colours, but I would wait till the nurses appointed (say Rathbone's) were essentially Queen's nurses belonging to no other association, and I would give the badge to *all* (these and others recommended by the affiliated unit); but we shall see what the Committee say. The different associations have each got a useful dress and the Catholics are sure to.

To H. F. P.

April 24th, 1890.

"Having more to do than you can manage," you yet find time to write to me while I put off my letter for the most trivial reasons. I think I must have given you an account of our Committee —Bonham Carter desired Lady R. to attend and hold her tongue (or equivalent to it), and when he rapped aspersely on the table when she tried to *chuchoter* with Peile, she looked quite frightened. However *we* (*I* had no business there) defeated B. C. when he insisted the superintendents could dismiss a nurse without a *reason* (good) and without *appeal* (bad). Paget was strongly against this, and carried the point. She may suspend the nurse and report her to the local Committee.

I think the resolutions passed were quite excellent and the matter of rules, etc., most carefully threshed out. The Duke of W. ventured on one suggestion but was pooh-poohed by Bonham Carter, so held his tongue. I also was snubbed, but as we had our way I didn't care. I think he

is a valuable man, that general objector Ruthey. A. hinted darkly he had a bomb ready as to the relations of St. K. and the Jubilee Institute, but Peile warded it off by saying the matter was not under discussion. I feel this will be the bone of contention on May 6th when the Council meets and when, I suppose, the contention between you and the trustees will be aired.

Sultan is now the property of Alberta Ellis, and I only hope she won't play tricks and that she will be careful about the children and the small dogs.

From Professor Huxley to M. E. P.

GRAND HOTEL, EASTBOURNE,
November 24th, 1890.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

As the possessor of three addresses, one in London, one here, one Hodeslea, Eastbourne, the house into which we move in a few days' time, my letters do not reach me with perfect regularity, otherwise I should not have kept you waiting so long for an answer.

I have heard of Miss Naden's Essays, but I have not read them and did not know that Mr. Spencer had noticed them. Your interest in them will lead me to get them and write and tell you how they strike me. But I am bound to say that "Hylo" idealism is a word I fear to my ears. The prophet and priest of that doctrine is a certain Dr. Lewin, who writes at interminable length in a worse hand than my own and has tried to drag me into controversy any time these twenty years.

Perhaps I am prejudiced, but Hylo-idealism,

according to his statement of it, seems to me to be a crude mixture of Berkeley and Spinoza by a man who understands neither the evil—I mean intellectual evil—of this time nor the attempt to evade the admission of our intense ignorance of everything beyond the phenomenal world.

The philosophers sneer at the theologians for believing in the reality of the magic lantern pictures they throw upon the joy about us; and straightway do exactly the same thing themselves.

Ever, dear Lady Ponsonby,

Faithfully yours,

T. H. Huxley.

Abergeldie,
1893.

Apparently a page torn from a journal and pinned to the letter following.

Vernon Lee [Miss Paget] is riveting me at this moment with her books, sayings and letters; and she is one of the very few people whose individuality is worth while to study and understand apart from her works. I therefore mean to answer her last letter on the preceding page as carefully as I can and make notes of my answer here which will make her next letter very interesting. She has such a great literary gift and such a subtle imagination that when I am pondering over a passage in one of her books, I do not quite know where I am, whether she is forcing me to see things through her spectacles, so that she may be clothing fact and person with qualities derived entirely from her imagination, or really if they

ever had a separate existence of their own. It does not usually matter what the text is, but a letter shows the lining of a mind more than anything else; and in this instance the theme being Ethel Smyth [the Composer] it is doubly interesting to read the interpretation of one exceptional woman by another.

DEAR MISS PAGET,

It seems rather a piece of humbug to try and express the great pleasure it gave me to receive your letter when I have allowed a whole month to pass without thanking you for it. The fact is that a letter such as this gives one so much to think about that I should feel it was impossible to write a careless answer neglecting to be quite sure that I am saying what I mean and meaning what I say. Ethel Smyth has just left us and was in a charming and very companionable mood while she was here. I am glad you have discovered the kind gentle vein in her. I agree with you that kindness is the first of all qualities (I know that you don't quite believe that I care for it so much), but indeed the law of kindness is to me the secret of Christianity, and that law of love meting out gentleness and sympathy to the stupid and inefficient seems to me the only thing that makes life endurable. That is why, I suppose, that the gentle tenderness E. S. shows in her relations with me is the thing I like best in her. This sounds very egotistical, but I mean I like it for her sake as well as for mine, the pleasure her affection gives me in spite of her rather hectoring manner; for

to be thoughtful and gentle to one much older than herself proves that she is not all steel. Her singing is very beautiful and there is a vibration in it which does not suggest the cling clang of engines and the hammering out of metal on an anvil, but something much more intense and tender. Your description, however, made me smile, for given some aspects of her character and ways it is *selon moi* absolutely accurate. Strange to say, knowing her as well as I think I do now, her restless activities do not greatly move me. I wish they were not there, but they are mere excrescences which as her life deepens and widens will disappear. But I find it very difficult to make up my mind as to the amount of capacity and force there is. It does not much matter what my mighty mind may arrive at by way of conclusion, but it does signify to me to see clearly what I do think, and my interest in her career is unbounded and I should like to leave off groping and I cannot; it is this sense of being puzzled that causes me to write so fully, for from time to time, if we compare notes, I may find the fog lifting. There is, however, nothing so hopeless as to begin to know one person through another's interpretation. At the best and at first hand one cannot hope as, in fact, in everything else to get to the absolute truth. An approximation is all that is to be hoped for.

There is a splendid vigour about the way Ethel does what she has in hand as if it were the one thing in the world worth doing. There is something in her Mass very near genius, but not

quite. It is because of the demon of restlessness which seems to take the force out of it. Again, her strong belief in herself, her assertion positive and deliberate that she knows her work is very good is very convincing.

Now to leave Ethel Smyth for the moment (you will think it is high time) and let me tell you the deep pleasure Euphorion * has given me, but do you know your powers of imagination almost frighten me. In Hauntings * you have a subtle way of making your reader use his imagination till he sees with your eyes and hears with your ears but fancies it all comes from himself. I have just begun Baldwin * and have re-read Miss Brown.*

* * * * * * *

Sir Henry died in 1895. The following letters from the Queen, relating to the last illness and death, are given to show her ever ready sympathy with those in sorrow and her deep appreciation of and sorrow for the loss of Sir Henry.

To this is added an interesting memorandum, found among Lady Ponsonby's papers, and evidently written not long after Sir Henry's death, giving some account of her work with his letters and incidentally a very charming character sketch of Sir Henry himself.

OSBORNE,
January 29th, 1895.

DEAR MARY,

Louise gave me your message, & I write these lines to say that I hope you will make use of Osborne Cottage *as long as you* & it is

* All books by Vernon Lee.

considered right for dear Sir Henry to remain there. I wish I c^{d} be of far more use, but you *know how* distressed I am at this sad & trying illness of your beloved Husband & I w^{d} say much more when I see you, but I am afraid of upsetting you. But I *do* feel so deeply for you.

May God help you & strengthen you to bless & relieve Sir Henry is the earnest prayer of your affte.

V. R. I.

WINDSOR CASTLE,
November 21*st*, 1895.

DEAREST MARY,

It is very difficult for me to find words to express how deeply grieved I am at the sad termination of dear Sir Henry's long & trying tho' I think & believe painless illness. Prepared to a great extent as we were lately—one never is really prepared & the blow is not the less severe when it comes—You have been the most devoted of wives & have nursed him with the most touching & unremitting love & care, & this must be satisfaction to you & I fear however that now that the strain is over the blank will be terrible & I can only pray that you & dear unselfish devoted Maggie may be supported in the loss of dear kind Sir Henry, who was so universally beloved by all, high & low—is very great. He was always so kind & so fair & just that I miss him terribly—his memory will ever be gratefully remembered by me & mine.

It is a comfort to have one of his sons with me,

& keep up a tie with you & your children. Begging you to say everything kind to your children.

believe me always
Yours
very affly.
V. R. I.

I hope Betty was able to be there. I trust James. Trust yours & Maggie's healths won't suffer.

OSBORNE,
December 26th, 1895.

DEAREST MARY,

I felt a sort of stupid myself in *saying* it to you and unless I wrote to say how much I wish you w^ld^ accept the appointment as extra Bedchamber woman, which will keep up your connection with me, tho' *that w^d^* not be needed, for His Wife would always be a friend.—

Beatrice is very anxious to see you for a wee time and have some conversation with you and w^ld^ propose going to see you to-morrow m^rng^ either at 11 or 12, wh.ever suited you, w^ld^ not interfere with your going to Whippingham. You must let me go & see you at 12 or before on Saturday. Perhaps you w^ld^ kindly consider the communication I made to you about your son-in-law as confidential as it is only known to the Horse Guards as yet.

Ever
Yours
Affectly.
V. R. I.

Balmoral Castle,
May 25th, 1897.

Dear Mary,

I cannot tell you how much pleasure your lovely Bell has given me, or how much underlies it & am touched by the inscription. But it needs nothing to remind me of your dear kind Husband whom I miss so often & so much! —I always take with me the lovely Album you & He gave me 10 years ago.—How many are gone since then! Your dear Husband & Sister & I have lost three boys dear sons-in-law, a dear friend's son, & other dear relations & friends.! !—

It makes the approaching Jubilee a time of sadness for me.

Fritz gets on extremely well, but O the amount of work at the present moment is overwhelming.

Trusting that you & Maggie are well,—With renewed thanks,

Ever
yours
affly.
V. R. I.

The following was found among Lady Ponsonby's letters:

I am anxious to put the letters and papers left by Henry into some order. As far as sorting and dividing his correspondence into groups, nothing can be more orderly than the manner in which he has arranged them, but his private letters to me are a running commentary on the politics of the day and on the private correspondence carried

on between himself and the Ministers. Also the recollection I have of his method of work, may explain some passages where the part he himself played is kept in the dark from his great wish to efface himself. It would be very distasteful to me to ignore this wish or to bring anything to light which he would have been silent about. At the same time I can see no objection to separating what is interesting from what is merely routine and office work. Also my remembrance may be valuable of his method of work and of his reticence about volunteering advice outside his department. Of my share in helping him to come to the decisions which were almost without exception wise and just, I must speak, lest I should be given credit for more influence than I really possessed. A great deal of his daily work was quietly got through every day without much comment. Anything trifling that happened in the usual Court life, if it was amusing, he of course told us all of it, and I think sometimes how intolerable Court life would have appeared if the extraordinary sense of humour which he possessed had been absent. To go on to the more important affairs on which he had to make up his mind as to what advice he would give, he was by way of keeping these entirely to himself. When H. was appointed, the Queen, who certainly approved and liked me as a Maid of Honour, suddenly was in a blue fright lest I should have my head turned at the thoughts that state secrets were accessible and that I should pull strings and in short become an *intrigante*. Henry laughed at my indignation

and said he would report me for saying irreverently that I much preferred reading what was going on in the *Pall Mall Gazette* than decyphering pompous and *arriéré* despatches. This subject cropped up again on other occasions, but the Queen was convinced at last that I never meddled. Sometimes she talked to me very confidentially about public questions. I do not think she meant to lay traps, but I never appeared to have heard of the particular matter she spoke about before, and never betrayed myself. And so it came about that the state of things I will describe was a pretty constant average measure of my help and use.

If a letter came requiring much thought and care in the answering H. would write a rough copy and bring it over from his office, and if he had to pass its contents on with comments and advice to the Q., he would show it to me and in nine cases out of ten there was nothing to talk over. He had, from intimate knowledge of the Queen's character and her ways, learnt what to leave out, and not to press an unwelcome conclusion in a first letter, and then perhaps put it into a second letter and then very strongly but incidentally. This was sometimes very important, especially to secure a full hearing for a minister, especially if that minister was not much in favour. The Queen very often took no notice of the implied criticism or praise or of the inference drawn from certain facts, but these passages would modify her views and she almost always acted upon them. Then in the 10th instance I might perhaps look doubtful and ask if this or that was open to misconstruction,

and might not such a word be changed or cut out. He then considered it, was never annoyed, and if he agreed, tore the letter up and wrote another. This was the whole extent of my influence. I never remember a single instance of disagreement or dispute on such matters. It never occurred to me to meddle or inquire about any business on which he felt obliged to be silent. He knew this, he knew also that I was not curious, and that until the moment came when he felt inclined to discuss these private matters I should be content to wait.

It is difficult to say anything about the spirit in which he worked without being led into speaking generally of his character. Upon this point I feel strongly how painful it would be to say what I should feel afterwards fell short of the truth, perhaps still more painful to speak openly in appreciation and praise of what is in my eyes too precious to allow others to share with me, that is the knowledge of the simplicity and force, and at the same time of the shrewdness and gentleness which went to make up that strong, generous, loveable character. I may, without running the risk of falling into either mistake, say there is one supreme note which appears to me to strike one throughout the whole correspondence, and which corresponds with the dominant impression in my mind with regard to him. That note is self-effacement. It is not only that the absence of egotism and vanity was simply a second nature, it was above all the absence of effort and the unconsciousness with which he put himself always

last which was astonishing. The remarkable thing was that in this self-effacement he put as much will and concentrated energy in his work as another man would do who wished to see the result of his personal effort, and have the satisfaction of having his exertions recognised and his claims in success acknowledged. These observations are necessary to the understanding of passages requiring some such key to be read aright.

I must adopt some plan of making notes which will cause the important years of this 20 years' correspondence to come first in order. I shall put the heading of each letter in diary form in a notebook. After sorting the public letters of one year I will look through my private letters and add any corroborating passages from these. The 1884 letters have been chosen as the first year of my *recueil.*

Letters, 1884

R. Brett from Hartington reports Graham's advance on Teb to dislodge Osman Digna, this opens the news about Egypt. In March Sanderson sends commendation by E. Baring and Lord Granville of Gordon for declining to declare liberation of slaves—Mina Baring * is a strange mixture of what appears to me sometimes wrong-headed in conversation with a powerful way of suddenly seizing the key to the situation, and in a most discriminating way going straight to the right conclusion and right decision. I have put all Gordon's despatches and Evelyn Baring's

* Sir Evelyn Baring, afterwards Lord Cromer.

comments, many of which were never published in a book, together, and reading them together it is very striking how one can see that he always gave Gordon credit for a strong sense of what was practically possible in spite of the fanatical form of his religious opinions. He admired the force and masterfulness which made it possible for Gordon to control such a man as Zobehr and yet be ready (if he had been allowed) to act with him on equal terms. If one remembers how hateful slavery was in Gordon's eyes, he must have put a great restraint on himself to give up the proclamation of liberation. Mina Baring also understood the moment of silence which occurred when Gordon disagreed with his orders; he said so, but because he did not repeat his objections they thought he had given way, but having said his say, he was content to let it be. He was a bit of a fatalist and so was indifferent to the result of his failing to make his point understood. Lord Granville had a high opinion of him, but the analysis of a character like Gordon's was so out of his beat that he was lazy and let Gladstone and Baring fight it out.

CHAPTER VI

SOME CORRESPONDENTS

1895–1916

After Sir Henry's death, Lady Ponsonby, though retaining her rooms at St. James's, had to give up the Norman Tower at Windsor; the home was moved to Gilmuire, Ascot, where for the most part the last twenty years of her life were spent.

In no way did she relax her many and varied interests, but, on the contrary, retained all her enthusiasm for things both new and old. The following letters have been chosen more or less at random to indicate the multiplicity of her interests, in preference to any selection that might have given more biographical details.

To Arthur Christopher Benson

September 8th, 1896.

My dear A. B.,

I thank you very much for returning the Pascal. You have spotted the mistake running throughout the essay, that the attack on the English critics, which in fact is the keynote of the whole affair, is not definite enough. The fact is the vials of my wrath were first poured out on Mr. Courtney, whose article on Pascal fanned the smouldering indignation which I had felt when reading another in *Macmillan* and yet

another in *New Review*, and so I turned it all on to Courtney. Now it is too late to allude to these works of long ago, so I generalised, and so fell into the trap of becoming dull in the effort to avoid being personal. I think I might put a note at "the learned Professor," bottom of page, to signify Courtney, though I am not sure that it is a good description. I mean I am uncertain whether he is a Professor, and do not know if he is learned!

I like your idea of writing a kind of preliminary sketch of the society of the day, and of the religious disputes, mixed up as they were with the worldly side of life, and finally dealing more fully with the Jesuits and Jansenists quarrel, and so leading up to the greatest of the Jansenists, Pascal. I feel much more inclined to do this than to pull the article altogether to pieces. I will also attempt to translate the passage from Bourget, but this is more difficult to me than the other. When I see the beauty of a French bit of writing I have not the least idea how it is to be put into English. I don't *see* it, but it is good practice to try.

I think if ever this great work sees the light, I shall give the *Contemporary* the chance of accepting it.

I am perfectly delighted to hear of your shooting and fishing. Such a stretching of the limbs in fresh air and sun must be so good for you.

Far from thinking you were long in giving me your opinion, I never expected you to look at the thing until you were quietly at home.

How I wish I were going to spend a few quiet days at Addington! but the delay about the Sunningdale house never seems to end, and I have put off my return now until the beginning of October.

Betty received yesterday a very good letter from Maurice about socialism, which she has taken up. Some of his remarks are more commonplace than he knows, for instance, the now old remark that Tolstoi did more for humanity when he wrote *Anna Karenina* than when he makes shoes, but his rage with his cousin for being under the dominion of a sect is amusing, and he carries the war on brightly and vigorously. I certainly prefer him in this mood than in the curled darling stage, and am glad not to have been mistaken in thinking the literary humour would return.

From A. C. Benson to M. E. P.

ETON COLLEGE,
November 11th, 1897.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

I must write you a line in answer to your letter, though I seem to be always defending myself against the amiable reproofs of my friends. "But," as David said, "let not their precious balms break my head!"

Do you not think that when one reaches a certain age, one must make certain choices, certain surrenders? You are naturally so cosmopolitan and, if I may say so, so vivacious that I don't think you quite understand how limited

other people's vitality is, and how they have to tend the flickering flame.

If the holidays did not afford a prospect of rest I could not keep going. And rest must be *ease* and *peace of mind*. You have no conception what a trial a new house and new people are to me. I am dizzy with impressions, conjested with memories by the end of the day. My mind is one that records wall-papers and turns vases upside down; and it is weary work.

Perhaps I *ought*—but I *cannot*. And if I am to become a harmless drudge, why, there are worse fates!

I will tell you all I can about Mr. Leigh when we meet—when.

I enjoyed your letter very much.

Affectionately yours,

ARTHUR BENSON.

To A. C. Benson

GILMUIRE, ASCOT,
November 12th, 1897.

MY DEAR A. B.,

Only a line to say it was a real pleasure to know my balms had not broken your head. You are so good and kind!

For goodness' sake, don't think I want you to tour about in country houses. I have done such a lot of it in my time and I can quite conceive loathing it. Only one exception you must make, where your æsthetic instincts will neither be appealed to nor, I hope, too much repelled. At Gilmuire you will be reminded of two things,

neither of which I hope too displeasing in your eyes, a little touch, in very small, of Norman Tower and an Eton boy's room with its odd mixture of sporting and military prints, a home-manufactured water-colour drawing and various incongruities. You will be perfectly at ease in a comfortable chair and have leave to come and go, talk or be silent as you wish.

No, in spite of what you say of your inertness I think, on the contrary, it requires a great deal of character, another word for vitality, to do what you like, and here I do indeed commend you.

You have not the appearance or the manners, neither have you the faintest intention of becoming a mere drudge. But we must leave all this for a more fitting opportunity.

Thank you again for your amusing letter.

Yours affectionately,

M. E. P.

To A. C. Benson

St. James's Palace,
November 8th, 1897.

My dear A. B.,

I am very much flattered by your sending me your Diary. It interested me greatly, and it has made me feel that I know you much better since I read it. I feel inclined to criticise two or three points, however, which will lead to future pleasant converse, I hope, at Gilmuire.

1. I ask myself, is it a good thing that you should, during your holiday, associate with exactly

the same friends as you are thrown with in your working time; you could not become "a regular beak," but others similarly situated could not escape, if there were no break, no *complete* break, in the routine of existence.

2. Might not the result be a rather narrow estimate of character, if some you came across accidentally, did not fit into the mould you, under the influence of your friends, had settled was the right one, it might fare ill with them, I fear.

I knew Mrs. Fanny Kemble, the mother of Mrs. Leigh (Dean of Hereford's wife), and she was a deeply interesting woman, and I should much like to meet the daughter, but she seems to have displeased you by her dislike to total-abstinence platforming (in which I agree), so I am disappointed to think you will probably refuse to tell me anything about her.

Now this sounds rather ungracious, considering how much I enjoyed the very human document, and how determined I am to read future numbers!

The account of Gladstone is delightful; it is so graphic, and leaves on one's mind such a clear, interesting impression. Again thank you very much; my acknowledgment is not so prettily worded as Henry James's, but I do not think you will be angry.

We enjoyed our visit to Cambridge very much. I wish you had been able to come.

Ever yours affectionately,

MARY E. PONSONBY.

To Hon. Sydney Holland

April 29th, 1898.

DEAR MR. HOLLAND,

I fully intended going to the next Meeting of the Council [of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Nursing Institute] on the 4th, but I have been ill with a rheumatic cold, and I fear I shall not be able to leave the house. I will write a letter of apology to Mr. Peile. Since the question of the enlarging of the Council has been started, I have very attentively considered the position of those members who, without belonging to any sub-committee, are rather an encumbrance than a help in the work of administrating the affairs of the Institute.

You said truly, that as the Council became larger, it would be impossible to prevent its becoming gradually a registering body, confirming the resolutions of the executive, and taking no part in the discussing of measures.

There has been a tendency in this direction for some time, as Mr. Peile has strongly discouraged any member who endeavoured to understand those questions upon which there might be a difference of opinion, but in spite of opposition, we asserted our right of seeing the papers relating to the matters under discussion, and with the help of Mr. Bonham Carter and special members of sub-committees, who distinctly would not have their opinion over-ridden without protest, the Council as a whole did, I venture to think, on many occasions very good work.

There remained one difficulty, which had we continued on the same lines I fully intended to try and overcome, *i.e.* the difficulty of mastering the different points to be considered when the Agenda is sent only one or two days before the meeting of the Council. This, however, is not important now; in fact, I think the useless members need not be so amply informed as was necessary before. While keeping up a general interest in the proceedings, it really appears to me unnecessary that each member should do more than put in an appearance now and then, to show that interest. If you have always to deal with a foregone conclusion, it is really a mere waste of time to study each point elaborately. I have a horror of a pretence of work, and all points to the better way of leaving the government to the Executive *and* the President.

When a question has been decided, it is idle to go back over the ground, and to make objections which cannot be made good.

But I have now come to the object I have in view in writing to you, and upon which you will, I am sure, if you can, set my mind at rest.

An overgrown Council, the members of which are in great part appointed for a variety of reasons (convenience, money, considerations, etc.), must naturally depend entirely for guidance on the Executive Committee. What security is there that the latter will always be chosen wisely? There were at first so many restrictions from the advisers of the Queen, and from the original Trustees, that Mr. Peile was kept on the rails

by their supervision, on the appointment of the members of the Executive Committee, and afterwards in the careful selection of each member of the Council; now I do not see where the check is to come from. As the members of the Executive drop off, the President would easily get the majority of a large ill-informed Council to appoint anybody he chose to fill the vacant place.

Please to consider all I say of Mr. Peile as strictly confidential. I have no objection to our President at all if he is kept in order, but when I have been worsted in a fight, I have found vagueness and caprice to be the most difficult weapons to meet.

I gave up being on the Committee for Dress and Badges, as we were made to alter our decisions according to the last fancies of the reigning influence of the moment, and the first decisions of the sub-committee were reverted to after all.

These are things of the past, and the present is only of importance, although past experience may help us in knowing what to avoid. It appears to me that you are the person who can control Mr. Peile best, and that is why I venture to bore you with so long a letter. If you will, *not* answer me at length, but give me a few words of comfort on the situation, I should be grateful.

I have written at such length that I dare not enter into the aspect of the Q. V. I., which you may very likely call sentimental. I, whose opinions are generally considered ultra liberal, have a strong vein of conservatism on the subject of the Queen's nurses. I know how the idea of

St. K. being an apanage of the Queens of England was the starting point of the whole undertaking. The fight with Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the first instance to retain it, the struggle to put life into the old bones, and urge the occupiers to join in the endeavour to turn St. K. to real account. Then the project of inducing the Queen to return her people's pence in a gracious gift from the Queen patron of St. K., and successfully steering through all the opposition, all this makes me—who watched the undertaking from the beginning—anxious that the distinctive royal character of the Institute should be kept on. But it is not easy to inspire either the Patrons or the members with the interest sufficient to effect this, neither do the Queen's present advisers know or care enough about it to watch the proceedings as closely as formerly. As the scheme widens it necessarily must become more democratic, and it is a good thing, on the whole, it should be so.

Two points alone appear to me to be worth fighting for: (1) That the standard of Nursing should by no means be lowered, and (2) that the passion for affiliation should be kept within bounds.

I shall go up to St. James's on about the 12th to 18th. If you are in town and would look in, I should be delighted to see you. I imagine, however, you will be rather afraid of me after this long-winded epistle!

Yours very truly,

MARY E. PONSONBY.

From Maurice Baring

who was thinking of leaving the Diplomatic Service to devote himself to writing.

March 21st, 1900.

My dearest Aunt M'Aimée,

I have just read Arthur's interesting article and I entirely disagree with his conclusions. First of all, I think *il n'y a pas de sot métier.*

Secondly, I think his arguments do not prove the Diplomatic Service to be worse than any other profession, they merely tend to show that the average diplomat is not an exceptional human being. He says that there are examples of men distinguishing themselves in this profession and rapidly, but that they are exceptions; but so are the people who distinguish themselves in any profession, and people who (these too are rare) distinguish themselves at all, do so because the average standard of *les autres* is a mediocre one. Also a great soldier, lawyer, etc., is born and not made as well as a great diplomat.

Then I think he compares (not so much in the article) the disadvantages of the Diplomatic Service with the advantages of other professions, or at least the disadvantages of the D. S. against the advantages and disadvantages of others. He does not look at the whole truth about other professions. He says he would like to be Captain Morgan because Captain Morgan is spanking the boom in South Africa, but that circumstance is to Captain Morgan's profession what a Fashoda crisis is to the Diplomatic profession. He says he wouldn't like to be George Buchanan because

George Buchanan is full of *paquets* about the Duchess of Hesse: he would not mind being Allan Aynesworth, but probably Allan Aynesworth is full of *potins* about Julia Neilson or someone else. He says people have no opportunities and can only stagnate, and have therefore no preparation for when big things come. I do not see the necessity of stagnation. Spring Rice, O. Herbert, Arthur Hardinge, Elliot, Reggie Lister, don't seem to have stagnated. Austin Lee is a good instance of what one who is not born a Lord Lytton or a Stratford de Redcliffe can make himself. If one stagnates, it is surely one's own fault. He puts me out of Court because he says I am at Paris and when I am somewhere else I will think differently. But two years at Paris is so much to the credit side; so that if it is paid for by two years at Rio—a price I am only too willing to pay—the account is still square. The majority of professions seem to me all *type* Rio without the intermittent molasses. Reggie says he liked being at Athens quite as much as being here. Of course if one surrounds the profession with a halo of glory one is bound to be disappointed; but if one treats it like a Bank, I don't see that it is worse than any other profession in its disadvantages and certainly better than some in its advantages.

The very fact of its being full of *Butores* [fools] ought to make it easier for the people who are not *Butors*.

If the system of putting people out of other professions is to be applied, then why not apply

it to other professions and send an intelligent German Staff Officer to make the plan of campaign instead of Buller?

I think there is quite enough opportunity for the clever people to distinguish themselves and quite enough ordinary routine work for the others; in fact, I think it, the Diplomatic Service, is quite as good as any other. I am stupid, and repeating myself. Arthur says, "If you are extraordinarily lucky you may be Minister at Belgrade in 35 years." In the first place, people who are extraordinarily lucky are more than this (*vide* Herbert, Charlie Hardinge), and what is the average run of people in other professions in 35 years?—Second head of a Dept. in the F.O., Head clerk in Somerset House, a retired Colonel or sailor. In fact, I think Arthur's quarrel is with human nature and the destiny of man.

I have written an article on the *Aiglon* which may come out in *The Speaker!*

Yours affy.,
M. B.

From Edmund Gosse to M. E. P.

The following letter refers to an article on Queen Victoria written by Sir Edmund Gosse, from information chiefly supplied to him by Lady Ponsonby.

29, Delamere Terrace,
Westbourne Square, W.,
6. 5. '901.

Dear Lady Ponsonby,

I am very much puzzled at your having heard that I "acknowledged the authorship" of the article. I have not done so.

Mrs. Ady (Julia Cartwright) knows the Murrays* very well, and she told her brother, who is in the F.O., that I have written it, and he challenged me. I replied that I never even spoke to the Queen. He told his sister, who replied that "that was all nonsense," for she "knew I had." And he added that your son Arthur said he knew I did it. Then I shrugged my shoulders. This is the only way in which I can guess that it has come out. And now, at all events, it seems to have gone in again, for it is published authoritively to-day that Sir Theodore Martin is the author.

We have just come back from Aldershot, from staying with the Bullers. Sir Redvers, on Saturday, started the article at dinner. He said we ought all to read it, an absolute faithful portrait, and the last that would ever be drawn of her. Fortunately I was not particularly addressed, and the conversation passed into other channels. What I should very particularly like to know is—does the King *object* to it, or is he pleased? Do tell me this.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) EDMUND GOSSE.

I am told that Sir W. Harcourt says that he knows from internal evidence that the article is yours, and that it is no use for you to deny it!

* The Murrays certainly never told Mrs. Ady this as they understood that the article was written by Ly. P.

To A. C. Benson

GILMUIRE, ASCOT,
October 29th, 1901.

MY DEAR A. B.,

I was on the point of writing to you to say (1) that I should like to establish with you the same kind of correspondence I have with Maurice: to follow one letter quickly with another, so as to finish a sentence, as it were, not expecting an answer, and *getting none*, but a fresh start on his part, three days, three weeks, or three months later. On this principle I wish to tell you how much I agree with you on the second-line parts of Sister Theresa; you say—don't you?—that it is a good study of the different ideals the several characters are pursuing, made with the help of practical realistic analysis—no, you expressed it much better than that, but "the ideah, mees," as our drawing-master used to say, was confirmed in my mind that *you* are *au fond* a strong idealist, but in practice a very distinct realist.

No. 2 on the block is the time-honoured, pathetically constant cult of mine: old Pascal. Having found the process of allowing an article to lie by and incubate in a drawer, and then add and re-cast it, to answer in the instance of an essay on George Eliot and Georges Sand, having been cordially accepted by the *19th Century*, I unearthed Pascal, and found a few notes by you so very helpful, that I am quite interested in the process of turning it out afresh, and cannot resist thanking you for your help.

I don't think my project will ever come to

anything; it is, in fact, or rather it leads, in fact, to such very big speculations, touching the thought of the present moment, that it is all too vast, and I am too old, I am afraid, for such an undertaking.

Please adopt my plan and write incoherently of anything *qui vous passe par la tête* (why not English!), but above all, tell me seriously something about what is, in fact, the main point of this scribble. How are the Cornish's? I am so dreadfully grieved for them that I can scarcely bear to speak of their sorrow.

Best love,

Yours affectionately,

M. E. P.

Fritz is ordered to S. Africa next week.

To A. C. Benson

GILMUIR, ASCOT,
January 24th, 1903.

MY DEAR A. B.,

I was very glad to see your handwriting. I was dreadfully disappointed not to go to Tremans, but if I had I should not have seen you. Advices from Windsor led me to think that Dr. Warre was losing his grip on his *milieu*, and I was rather maddened by the thought that your moment might be at hand, and that whether from diffidence or indifference you might lose the unique opportunity of being the only man in England who can grasp what should be done in the public school difficulty and who by a masterly use of scholarlike leisure and power of vigorous administrations, would simply start a new type of headmaster. I

feel I am writing in rather 18th-century style, but I assure you I feel it in a thoroughly 19th-century fashion of "damn it all, we want a new type of headmaster"! I refrained from writing because I thought it would be officious, and now your friendly letter has come I know you will not take this amiss. You say it is dreadful to be a reformer at 66. Well, I don't know but with a little *feu sacré* in one's being I think it might be possible.

Maurice [Baring] was here yesterday, as delightful and unegotistical as it is possible to be. He hoped so much to meet you, and I wonder it didn't come off. I liked his *Black Prince*, and still more the *Gaston de Foix*, but Ethel Smyth tells me the last thing he has written is still better. He gets more delightful every time I see him. His over-nervous manner is leaving him. I am glad to think he is not leaving his profession, merely leaving the diplomatic service for the foreign office. His account of the deep solitude of Count Benkendorf's country house with no possibility of a call from a neighbour struck me as the very place for anyone in love with loneliness.

No, I do not think you are over given to seclusion, but if I may say so without impertinence, I fancy you give up the management of your leisure to your friends. I cannot expect you (*chacun selon son temperament*) to take things in the violent way your rival, a Russian, we met at Aix does. *Demain je franchirai la Caspienne*, two or three days later a telegram from Samarkand to inquire after my cold.

Speaking of Russians, do read a study of

Tolstoi in *Types*, by Chesterton. Tolstoi is a man who interests me by the fact that I am forced to dwell on his great side, but cannot help being bored and provoked with his fads. Do read *Types*, paradoxical but wonderfully incisive and arresting; Maggie is sending it to Tremans to amuse the other Maggie, after the flu', which I am deeply sorry to hear she has got, and it puts an end to all the St. James's and Barton Street combinations we had made.

I must read Whitwell Elwin's own life, and avoid his studies of other people; a very tiresome form of literary effort, which sounds inconsistent, after recommending strongly Chesterton's *Types*.

Do you remember encouraging me about an old essay of mine on Pascal? In spite of your help and encouragement I put it away in a drawer and forgot all about it. I came across something by Paul Adam and the new Positivist School, and reflected I had seen the whole *donnée* very much better, and more deeply worked out before. I had to *deterrer* old Pascal, and re-wrote it; strange to say, was pleased to think the new part was far better than the old (what do you think of that for 70-years-old conceit!), and I asked Knowles' advice as to whether to send it to Contemporary of Fort Atlantic, at which he answered he had promptly sent it to the printers on his own account! Do look at it in the 19*th Century*, so that you may, I hope, think your old friend has not gone down the hill too suddenly.

Matthew Arnold's notebook accounts for Mrs. H. Ward, don't you think? and his imposing lists

of books, ending with marks for *L'Irreparable* (Bourget—one of his worst) in French, and Cooper's *Spy* and *Pioneer*, which I admired, in English—never could get my children to read.

I am so extremely sorry for the *contretemps* which will, I fear, prevent my seeing your dear Mother for some time.

Ever affectionately,
M. E. P.

To A. C. Benson

St. James's,
March 22nd, 1903.

My dear A. B.,

I was sitting down to write to you and say how much I liked my present plan of reading both your books *pari passu* one with the other, and without attempting to decide which I like best. *The Schoolmaster* I nearly finished last night towards 3 o'clock, and have too much to say upon it to begin now that I have a third topic, and of course, the selfish one carries the day.

I am very much flattered that you liked my Pascal.* The only excuse for an amateur attempt at writing is that the subject should be the *exposé* of the cults and conviction of a life, or deal with some questions of *l'art de la vie* not *l'art de vivre*, which from varied experiences and opportunities might make the amateur's opinion of more value than the expert's.

This study of Pascal comes under the first head. Practically I worked it out a few years ago, and then, goaded by modern inadequacy, to

* An article on Pascal written for the *Nineteenth Century*.

which I allude in the present article, I re-wrote the whole, was pleased to find the work of January 1903 far better in my own eyes than the younger effort, and I have been rewarded by a very much more appreciative reception than I expected. Your criticism "too allusive" is, I am sure, a sound one, and I have been blamed for it before. One always finds an excuse when convicted of a fault, and mine is that I was so afraid of diverting attention from the main line—Pascal's personality—that I hinted at the possible developments in modern controversies on his contentions and hoped my readers would work things out for themselves.

To get such a letter as yours, when a little bewildered and puzzled, as I was, as to whether I was guilty of an impertinence in writing the article at all, was most refreshing. Thank you for it gratefully.

Do you remember a little bit of collaboration between you and me on the subject? A review of a book on Pascal (which I have at Gilmuir) you undertook, and I gave you some help in the shape of insignificant notes on special points, and so it is not the first time we meet on the terrain.

Yours affectionately,

M. E. P.

To A. C. Benson

GILMUIRE, ASCOT,
November 30th, 1904.

MY DEAR A. B.,

I write without fear, for I am absolutely convinced that if I beg you not to answer my letter, you will do as I wish. I am sure you will get

such a mass of unasked-for advice, especially from women friends, that I hesitated to join the throng. I am, however, easily moved by the spirit of contradiction, and hearing some views on the subject of the headmastership of Eton, with which I disagreed, I cannot resist making my humble protest—this in very few words.

I am desperately anxious you should not step on one side from diffidence or disinclination—you have the vocation, and Eton has the claim. It is a unique case of a great national need proclaimed by all, and the right man at hand, acknowledged by a great majority to be *the* right man to meet that need, with the necessary courage and wisdom for the task. It seems absurd to speak of courage. Every candidate would surely have that obvious kind of courage which the bare undertaking of such a gigantic work implies, but the more subtle kind, which I know is yours, is very much more rare. By means of its possession you will have gained the art of ignoring difficulties which need not be dwelt upon, of passing by and waiting without bitterness till misunderstanding, and perhaps mistrust, made themselves felt, but were overcome. Patience as well as courage will be required to unravel the complicated knots, which the crossing of the threads of old tradition with those of new ideals have made, and which will require the gentlest handling, and the most serene and tactful manipulation, before the strands are straightened out, and the whole machine gets into working order.

And now you will say: "My dear friend, what

of myself? Are my tastes, my future, my pursuits, not to be considered for one moment?" I am afraid you will think my answer unsympathetic. I cannot but feel that if you elect to act upon big lines, and decide to forget yourself in what would really be a fine undertaking, your own happiness would follow as a matter of course.

Having no admiration for the glorified type of Headmaster, you would allow yourself leisure for your literary work. In short, having forced the Eton world to acknowledge you are to be omnipotent in settling what may, or may not, be allowed, in the way of alterations and reforms, you are not likely to allow your subordinates to interfere with your personal tastes.

But while I am rambling on, I feel as if every minute is important. I have already been told "A. B. has not made a sign of life," and more fatal still, the *enemy* is hard at work—canvassing hard for his brother—whose appointment, in the eyes of a great many, would be a real disaster.

But now I will let you off; I did not begin with apologies, neither will I end that way. You know quite well you will have my best wishes and love, whichever way you decide.

Ever affectionately yours,
M. E. P.

To A. C. Benson

GILMUIRE, ASCOT,
December 4th, 1904.

MY DEAR A. B.,

It is really a very nice friendly thing you have done, for you have shown me in every

line of your letter that you took mine exactly as it was meant, and any fear I may have had of appearing meddlesome and officious is set at rest for ever. I was quite honest when I asked you not to answer me, for in your silence I should have given myself the benefit of the doubt, but this assurance of kind interpretation is very pleasant and comforting.

You are so open and sincerely frank in your survey of your position that you have persuaded me that your objections are better founded, it appears to me, than I imagine. I must stand by my line of argument and still say the wisdom and strength necessary would follow the assertion of a strong conviction. But a real doubt as to having the vocation is much more serious; you might conquer the spirit of disinclination, you might sacrifice your personal ease and your tastes, but I agree with you, if this is done with a heavy heart, no inspiring impulse will stir your colleagues. The *feu sacré* will be wanting, and those masters who are lukewarm now will not give you the confidence which you say it is essential the headmaster should possess.

I am very sorry to be persuaded against my will; you must know *le fin fond* of the matter, your own mind and soul, better than I do, and to insist upon my conclusions when you have shown me my premises are wrong, would be idle.

I am sadly disappointed for Eton.

Thank you again and again for writing.

Yours ever affectly.,

MARY E. PONSONBY.

From A. C. Benson

TREMANS,
HORSTED KEYNES, SUSSEX,
August 12th, 1905.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

I was delighted to get your reply. I can't help remembering the story of the charming person Edwards in Boswell's life of Johnson, who had known Dr. Johnson as a boy and met him in London when they were both elderly men. The subject of philosophy was mentioned, and Edwards said, with a sigh, "Yes, indeed, Dr. Johnson, I have often tried to be a philosopher; but I don't know how, cheerfulness was always creeping in," that is the right point of view after all!

I don't think that I ever realised that you were disappointed about Eton, and now that you tell me, I am even more pleased that you cared than sorry that you were disappointed. I have not the smallest shadow of misgiving myself, and have rejoiced unfeignedly in my escape. It is a comfort too, for a poky person like me, to have shut the door upon ambition and turned the key. I used to think that the pleasures of detachment which the Emperor Aurelius preached were all pose. But it really has a very fine flavour about it. Irascible! never.

Affectionately yours,
A. C. B.

From Mary Cholmondeley

Albert Gate Mansions,
219, Knightsbridge, S.W.,
October 22nd, 1906.

Dear Lady Ponsonby,

I am quite sure that you are *not* a safe person to whom to confide any incident at my own expense! I shall have no sympathy from you! You will only laugh at my cruel predicament! And Howard Sturgis and Victoria chaff me without mercy. In short, it is weak of me to tell you, but I cannot help it.

I know nearly a hundred old bachelors between 40 and 50. *Would you believe it*, quite a number of them think I have lampooned them in the character of "Wentworth" in *Prisoners*. They say they recognise their own opinions, which I have obtained from conversation with themselves. In short, I am plunged in the deepest disgrace, and what is worse is that it *is* rather like several of them, only I never saw it till they fitted the cap on their own heads. No denials on my part are any use, no assurances that the character of "Wentworth" was greatly taken from life from a *married man*. No, they all know better, and refuse to be comforted. And I really don't think some of them will ever speak to me again.

Curiously enough, Howard Sturgis, who read the book in MS., *prophesied exactly* what has happened. He said that the triumph of Wentworth would be that all self-indulgent old bachelors would see themselves in him, just as all clergymen

believed themselves lampooned in Mr. Gushy. It proved that Wentworth was a universal type.

I think it *is* a high compliment to Wentworth's vitality, and of course I have been through it all before with my clergyman, Mr. Gushy.

The number of people who thought I had drawn themselves and the inconvenience of their annoyance I have not yet forgotten. One large family of relations has hardly spoken to me since *Red Pottage* came out. Yet Mr. Gushy was like hundreds of clergy, not like one, as letters to me testified from about 40 parishes each saying they recognised their own vicar.

How shameful it is of me to gabble on like this, especially if, as I hope, I am going to have a chance of seeing you!

Please expect in me, when we do meet, *a full-blown egotist*, for since *Prisoners* came out I have thought of nothing but it—which is myself.

Yours ever,

MARY.

Just as an afterthought, to show I can still take an interest in others, I ask after your health.

From Mary Cholmondeley

ALBERT GATE MANSIONS,
219, KNIGHTSBRIDGE, S.W.,
November 26th, 1906.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

I am *very* sorry I cannot come to you on Thursday to Saturday. I must not go away then for the night, for both my sisters will be in

the country, and I shall be in charge of my father. One of us always remains with him.

If he is well enough to be left for a few hours I am going down to Eton on Friday to see the Wall Game. I have been engaged long beforehand for this function by my Eton nephew, and I only hope I may be well enough to go when the day arrives.

Thank you very much for asking me. I am not lucky so far about going to Gilmuir, but some day in the summer I shall still hope to come. Is it not time for you to return to your Palace ?

I have had no news of you for a long time, but I hope I may conclude you are fairly well as you ask me to stay.

I am sure you will be glad that *Prisoners* has reached a fourth edition, and I am sure you will be sorry that within the last week yet another middle-aged bachelor has discovered that Wentworth "*was meant for him.*" And it is a little like him too, tho' I had never thought so until he mentioned it.

I am beginning to find London life such a strain that I am thinking of taking a little £25 cottage somewhere *very* quiet where I can run down and rest sometimes. A friend of mine has such a cottage near *his* cottage, and as soon as I am well enough, I am to go down and see it. It is very ugly and small, but it has adjoining it a *barn,* and I think I might turn that into a sitting-room if it is strong and watertight. Does this sound very *insane?* I have long wished for a tiny place where I could creep away and be alone

now and then, and the success of *Prisoners* makes it possible to gratify that wish in a very modest way. Do you know of a dear cheap little unfurnished cottage with a bit of garden at £25 to £30? I am assured that I can furnish for £100.

I have been reading for the first time a book that everyone else read some years ago. Do you know it? *Margaret Ogilvie*, by J. M. Barrie.

It is a study of his own mother who seems to have been exactly like our old nurse. The little book delighted me. Barrie has no pride, I think; and what an endearing quality humility is! I admire it so much that if it were not too late in the day I should begin to try to be humble in order to worm my way into your affections and Mr. Alfred Lyttelton's and Barrie's. But I am *too* busy to attend to that or anything else in the way of a writer!!!

If I have not lost my temper during the day, or been sarcastic with my sister because my throat hurts me, or cross to my maid because I had got my feet wet, I lie down at night feeling that there are not many people so saintlike as myself.

With much love,

Yours ever,

MARY CHOLMONDELEY.

From A. C. Benson

MUSTIANS, ETON, BUCKS,
July 12th, 1907.

MY DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

Many thanks for your letters and the good news.

I do wish you had mentioned to me the subject of the *Quarterly* Article before [on Queen Victoria, see p. 207]. I have always been inclined to pride myself on my own delicacy and discretion in *not* discussing it; and now I wish I had been indelicate and indiscreet.

From the moment I read it my opinion has never wavered—and I have read it several times since—that it was a little noble and transparent piece of character-drawing, revealing a very great and simple character.

No one whose opinion is worth 2*d.* has ever thought otherwise. My mother, *e.g.*, thinks it splendid—and many others.

I think the combination was just perfect. You gave Mr. G. a depth and penetration, and an eye trained to social nuances.

I am sorry about the sciatica—as my father said, personifying it, "that nymph has a brilliant touch."

Affectionately yours,
ARTHUR BENSON.

From Mary Cholmondeley

PRESHAW, UPHAM, SOUTHAMPTON,
December 27th, 1907.

DEAREST LADY PONSONBY,

I went to see *Waste* [a play by Granville Barker] and am prepared to quarrel seriously with you about it if you admire it *throughout*. I was immensely impressed by much of it, and especially by the third act when the ministers all meet. I thought the whole of that faultless;

also I was fully in sympathy with the slight importance of the worthless woman who made all the disturbance. All *that* I thought excellent, and I was not even horrified when Tubell owned brutally to the poor creature that his "spasmodic adultery" with her had been only a fit of drunkenness on his part.

But I became indignant and ashamed at what appeared to me the false sentiment when Tubell strikes himself on the forehead and says, "She has destroyed my child."

"The man has the child in his soul, as the woman has in her body."

How was he bearing it in his soul, when his soul was entirely absent when it was being conceived? He himself speaks of that moment as a fit of drunkenness; where was his soul *then?* That he should dare to pity himself for his lost chance of paternity!

And he, an elderly *roué* of 46, at an age when their deviations have lost what excuse youth can plead for them. How dare he?

He had no doubt often behaved like that before, if he could take it so lightly as he did, for it made no impression on him.

And yet afterwards he poses as a disappointed Father. It seemed to me decadent to the last degree, and curiously enough not a single review has noticed this point, this great flaw, as it seems to me, on an otherwise fine piece of work. How I should like to know what you felt about it, for you did see it, did you not?

Do you remember last summer laughing with

me over *Comments of Bagshot*, then coming out in the *Westminster?* We agreed they were banal, and platitudy, and vague, which last is, I think, always want of thinking a thing out. Do you remember how we both instanced as proof of this vagueness that sounds so well, and has no definite meaning?

"A perfectly just man always hears with equanimity that which has been brought about by his own fault." I am not sure I quote quite correctly, but that was the sense.

Then if it was by his own fault that he broke his only child's back, would he bear it with equanimity, or only if he broke his own leg?

And now we find that Spender himself is the author, and all the reviews are going into ecstasies over the greatness and the wisdom of this wonderful book. "We knew Mr. Spender was great, but we did not know he was as great as this."

And yet all I read, and I read several instalments, were ordinary and commonplace. Dear Lady Ponsonby, *what is the matter?* Do you think that the reviewers themselves are pompous and commonplace, and hail sign of it in authors and genius? Or do you think that all the instalments we read were bad, and all the rest magnificent?

Yours ever,

MARY.

CHAPTER VII

FAMILY LETTERS

MARY PONSONBY kept up a continuous correspondence with her children. Owing to their intimate character these letters do not lend themselves to publication, but the following extracts (chiefly concerned with the question of a career) are taken from letters written at various times to her youngest son.

To A. P., at Balliol

July 12th, 1890.

I scarcely know how to deal in a letter with such a large subject one that concerns you so nearly and therefore touches me deeply. If I appear to say truisms and platitudes, give them a chance, for you must remember that it is *de mon âge* to know the value of some apparently commonplace sayings, and naturally of yours to set aside such lore as antiquated and insufficient to meet your need. You are just at the age when opinions and convictions emerge from the shapeless, happy-go-lucky, fluid state in which they lie in a boy's mind and begin to take something like a definite shape. In whatever direction your temper and disposition of mind may lead you, whether to the dominion of authority and discipline, which in youth has great attractions, or on the other hand,

of liberty of thought and what Huxley calls the clear and veracious and accurate habit of mind passionately sought after by some minds, whichever of these two tendencies you may show a preference for should be treated in exactly the same manner. I mean with *deliberation, care and intense truthfulness.* I mean in matters of thought speculative, philosophical, ethical, religious, whatever form the opinions take, the result must be arrived at SLOWLY and in the manner I indicate, or "wreckage will set in." There is no short cut, no royal road to the knowledge of oneself any more than there is to any other kind of knowledge. Everything you read, every thought you think, makes its way through the laboratory of your mind, and if the work done is true and the thought is honest, the result is that what you contribute to the world's history and to your fellow creatures is as good an opinion as you are capable of forming, and though your share may never appear, a general consensus of such well-balanced opinions in many minds makes the best ideas to predominate in the long run. It is a long business. You will stumble and fall often by the way, but in spite of stones and thorns and misgivings and heartfailings I really believe it is the only course to pursue. . . . They say you are like me, as like as a young man can be to an old woman! I assure you it is not entirely without reason I speak as I do, for I know something of the depression and anxiety and doubt which may lie before you at 18. I was (as the low church people say) "awakened" by the Bishop of Oxford and gave myself up to the most

ardent high church. I can scarcely say when one phase of thought ended and another began. Each gradually developed from the preceding according to the books which bore upon the questions which I had at heart. Books like Newman, Butler, Williams, Moberly, Keble, etc. Books of French Gallican theology, and then through Mansel and other metaphysicians on to Mill, Herbert Spencer, Clifford and others of the scientific school. It was slow, very slow, and ten years passed before I could *constater* any marked difference of opinion in the general bent of my mind. Of course I know that a man's education tends to hasten matters, also that conclusions are arrived at much more rapidly now than in my youth. . . . The books which young men and women read point out advanced opinions and leave out unnecessary and obsolete forms of thought. I am not sure I think this altogether an advantage. The process of hammering out ideas, of thinking a thing out without help, is excellent discipline, and in the long run both the slow and the quick methods lead to the same conclusion, that absolute certainty is unattainable. Absolute anything I do not believe exists: all is relative. But I do not mean to enter into any analysis of what you may ultimately land in in the way of opinion. It is no more possible for anyone to predict the process of adding to one's ideas of developing than of modifying them, which goes on even at my age; but in my eyes one thing alone is certain, that honest and patient achievement in work and thought is a matter of time, and cannot be hurried.

To A. P.

August 12th, 1891.

I don't quite agree with you and Chauvet about the greater intolerance of the R.C.s. Of course the *raison d'être* of the Ch. of R. is the support of dogmatism *coûte que coûte*, and from their point of view I am not sure they are not right to defend the outworks, as, the thin end of the wedge of unorthodoxy once inserted, the inner citadel is threatened, a Renan or a Littré hammer away until there are very few stones left standing. Some R.C.s in this country, Lilly, St. George Mivart, etc., are ultra-liberal, go in for scientific criticism and don't care what is demolished so long as the Church remains, but it is a *tour de force* which, I think, is doomed to failure—like Mrs. Ward's attempt to reconstruct Christianity and substitute Ellesmerism for the old faith. Therefore I rather sympathise with the intolerance of the old school. I fancy if a R.C. priest was to find himself in a very Orange corner of Ireland or a very Presbyterian district in Scotland he would be sent to Coventry. . . . The Calvinist persecutions of Catholics in Geneva were every bit as narrow as the Huguenot persecutions by R.C.s. But I agree with Chauvet that politically Protestantism (I don't exactly know, and never did, what is exactly meant by the Protestant religion building *faith* upon a *negation*) makes a people freer and stronger, but he must be careful how he uses that argument and be prepared for *real* freedom, real right of private judgment and intellectual courage, for that,

in fact, is the source of the strength of Protestantism, not the bigoted, dismal, intolerant dogmatism which has no *raison d'être.*

To A. P.

December 2nd, 1892.

. . . The insufficiency you note in Jowett's definition of religion, to which I would add the difficulty (if you reject it) of choosing between: free inquiry, scientific demonstration—accepting all their limitations, of course, with the great drawback of losing all sense of mystery, all love of the ideal, all poetry, or the dogmatic organisation and discipline, the historic charm, the wonderful fascination, but the narrowness, the intolerance, the political and social inefficiency of the Catholic system. *Je ne m'arrête pas aux misères* which result from pitting these two against each other. It might be logically demonstrated, as Bourget tries to do in *The Disciple*, that the result of the first may be seen in all the horrors of the realist decadent school and the result of the second in the prostration of all intelligence and sense in the renouncing of every vestige of liberty—in the Inquisition, in fact—*but it would not be true.* Logic very seldom does get to the truth, for you have to leave so much unsaid and unexplored.

In very sharply defined, fiercely dogmatic creeds I imagine the sense of mystery is lost, and in the assertion that human nature is altogether evil and corrupt, which lies at the root of strictly logical Catholicism as much as of Calvinism. I do not see if one brick of the edifice is touched

what is to prevent the whole erection from crumbling into dust, or the opposite conclusion avoided, *i.e.* that *nothing is evil.* In the larger, wider, wiser aspect of Christianity, which from what you say and what I have read is Charles Gore's view (I suppose), we find the recognition of mystery, the tolerance of doubt, the absolute refusal to admit falsehood for the sake of expediency, and the consecration of effort—such consecration as will create habits of mind "forging chains" which when reason, heart and faith seem to fail, pull the poor disheartened mortal up towards the light.

To A. P.

February 12th, 1893.

Since the Empress Frederick has been here I have had long interruptions. She carries off 6 books at a time and finishes them off in a couple of days. She provokes me sometimes by thinking everything so easy. She demolished *The Prison* (by Brewster) by saying it had all been said before. I (rather with asperity), "Yes, but with a difference, and it is just that difference which prevents one arguing round and round in a circle." However, she listened now and then, but puts on a second-century look which rather prevents one going on.

To A. P.

August 10th, 1892.

I am absorbed in the Socialist articles by Sidney Webb (Beatrice Potter's *fiancé*) and my *Economic Review* and *assise carrément sur ma chaise,* I am

going systematically to write you my difficulties which you will solve. I think I shall send you a *Contemporary* and a new review with a short *résumé* of the different political platforms. Your father has been very powerful *faisant le mort* and yet accomplishing what he intends. His great art lies in never saying "I told you so." Maggie will have told you that the Kaiser waited upon us and handed the bread and butter round and the moselle with which we ought to have drunk his health. Great cordiality about your going to Kiel and "have you messages for my dear mama?" So all was *couleur de rose.*

Needless to say the help your father is, is everything, and while I am fidgeting over crowquill pens, he is *aux prises* with the Queen, Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, Pr. of Wales and Ed. Hamilton, friends of G.'s and of R.'s between whom there is tension, and pilots the whole concern in the most consummate way. The more they *jettent les hauts cris* the calmer he gets, and is quite firm. Nobody will ever know what the Queen owes to him.

I rather agree with you about Margot. I saw the beginning of her mistake in living on her capital (mentally) 3 or 4 years ago, and it's beginning to tell by her talking more and more for effect and playing the old set of tricks on young and old. Yet she has much more in her than most of the crew.

To A. P.

At that time an attaché at Constantinople.

March 9th, 1896.

Now about your *second* study. I have thought very much about it and agree entirely with what you say about focussing your thoughts and efforts on one subject instead of scattering them and frittering your time on desultory reading; not that I think *wide* reading a disadvantage. It is the fault of specialists that they are too easily bored with everything but their own subject. Your profession will prevent that, for you cannot really understand your trade unless you study the internal politics and turn from the ancient history, the language, even the dialects, of each country. Bismarck said the reason he found Odo Russell a match for him was, "he knows the history of our mistakes better than I do, and the reason of them." At all events the diplomatic profession makes an excellent scaffolding for an excellent super-structure. Of course you don't learn to know men; this comes by intuition and *le flair*, and that of course is the chief cornerstone, but you have these naturally and in a very marked way. I certainly do not advise another deep subject—a special science—when it takes a man's whole life to understand why a worm has no backbone. So I would take Art. Besides having a "goût" for pictures and painting it would be such a joy to *know* something really about the subject and, without trying to compete with professional artists, to learn as much as you

could so as to understand *les sommités*, you would find wonders in all European towns and studios to work in even in America.

To A. P.

February 21st, 1897.

Now I feel you have the key of the Eastern policy in your pocket and should like to know when you are going to turn it in the lock and dispose of all the *gobe moucherie* and *charlatanerie* that is going on. The *Daily Chronicle* provokes me so, that I long to leave word at the door: "Lady Ponsonby has gone to the Mosque to be received in the faith of Islam." Then the headings and contradictions and the vulgarity of the quotations from correspondents like testimonials to Eno's fruit salts. The truth is, I think, Lord Salisbury has managed the whole thing with great cleverness. He will make it inevitable that Greece shall have Crete in the course of time, but to hurry matters would simply send the German Emperor to the Pireus and make Russia very disagreeable in the Balkans.

To A. P.

March 12th, 1897.

Your analysis of the situation was deeply interesting, but I do not always agree with your general *donnés*. I go more with Lord Salisbury on some points and less with him than you do. Theoretically I detest his politics. He told the Empress Frederick, who seems to have talked great nonsense to him, that Democracy and

Autocracy must fight it out and Democracy must get the worst of it. "You (Empress) have always been a liberal and believe me it won't succeed." *Succeed!* Then you can imagine the tirade which followed, and which on the whole I agreed with, that liberal opinions must prevail in the long run in England unless we belied the whole of our history, and this would happen without a revolution. However, *practically* Salisbury *est dans son droit* at this moment, for the affair has been very well conducted. If there had been a regular scrimmage Russia would have made straight for Constantinople and laid a net right round India gathering up the meshes at Constple. The only thing that is ridiculous is to go on making proposals of reform which are always promised by the Sultan and never accomplished. Fresh massacres in Armenia and nobody takes any notice.

To A. P.

May 23rd, 1898.

So poor Gladstone is gone; his last illness makes me say "poor," otherwise what a fine full life it has been! Such a confirmation of my deep-seated belief that neither words nor deeds, neither creeds nor philosophy, even neither genius nor talent—only character matters.

Extracts from a memorandum found among M. E. P.'s papers, but whether it was ever inserted in a letter is not clear.

March, 1899.

. . . I have always seen the unsatisfactory side of the diplomatic profession as I have not

been moved by the success of the many *sommités* I have known, but I am a greater sceptic than Arthur can be at his age as to the value of any ordinary profession in itself in making a man. Those professions which have for their foundation a sense of vocation or of genius, even of talent, are apart. It isn't our business to analyse these or to reckon up the many failures owing to mistaken vocation, lack of genius or insufficient talent. The very mistake is an honourable one, but I suppose in Arthur's case even if the gift were there it is late to join an artistic profession. I am willing to allow I may be mistaken if I make up in my own mind a standard of what the diplomatic profession may be at its best. Rather an intimate knowledge of several ambassadors—Ampthill, Dufferin, Morier, Lyons, Lytton, Currie—may have misled me. All these are capable men but perhaps more or less touched with the peculiar faults which *la carrière* seems to develop, and after all it is misleading to reason upon exceptional instances. Besides, I shall be told things are different now from what they were. I have heard that argument used by the soldiers of to-day, and I would give the same answer to both. May not the difference lie in this: that formerly the men ruled the professions and now the professions rule the men? Yet at the present moment there seem to be some of the masterful kind left, for the destinies of east and west appear to be in the hands of a dozen diplomatists and we are watching their work with the greatest interest. I quite see there is a disheartening side, to consider the

possibility of spending long years at Copenhagen, Berne, Rio or Montenegro is not encouraging, but I have a very distinct idea that the F.O. have the flair of getting hold of the man they want and keeping their eye on him. . . . It is foolish to pick out individual instances. . . . If I have known Ampthill, have I not also met Howard de Walden; if Dufferin, also Augustus Loftus; if Lytton, also Bloomfield, etc., etc. One must take the profession *en gros*, not *en détail*. The net result in my mind in this as in other professions is that it is *character*, not circumstances, that matter. . . .

The value of leisure. I go so far as to say that it is the saving element not only in that profession but in many others. Tell me what a man does with his leisure and let his profession take care of itself. . . . I am not considering success when I say I am sure the hours you have to spend as you choose are the really valuable ones in your life. . . .

It would not be a bad thing perhaps to look at the past and remember how each step was weighed before we settled on the diplomatic profession. Jowett was all in favour of Oxford, as I particularly hated the thoughts of pushing and cramming as if to get through the exam. was the only object in the world. I asked him if the Bar wasn't a bigger and worthier career to try for. He didn't think A.'s was the kind of brain for the Bar. Nor did he encourage staying at Oxford and thinking of academic distinction and a literary career. He thought A. had extraordinary

quickness and knowledge of how to deal with men—surprising for his age—good abilities and a great power of silence and reserve. Then came the exam. . . . However, he seems to think the profession such a hopeless one that I feel it is really necessary to put the whole subject clearly in the light and then decide what will be the next step.

To A. P.

CRONBERG,
1901.

. . . The Empress went round the house in a bath chair this afternoon and I followed and regulated my steps and voice and intelligence accordingly for an hour and a bit, and had nearly a syncope in consequence. What M. was during the journey of efficiency and wonderful couriership I can't describe—an occasional malaprop in the middle of a very voluble German explanation made the stationmasters double up, and finally we mislaid a necessary box and she told the authorities she had left her box with her ancestor. . . .

Of the poor Empress I don't like to speak. She suffers very much at intervals, but is so wonderful in the keen interest in books, in people, in houses, that if you can divert her thoughts from her illness she puts as much energy in her speech as ever. I am afraid she is very ill, but everybody lives *au jour le jour*, and it is the only thing to do . . . the amusing thing is here how like it is to Windsor years ago and the impossibility of any *service* being done—no bells and, if there were, nobody to answer them. . . . It is all a matter of entreaty and mystery.

To A. P.

December 16th, 1903.

I think we are wrong in not admitting women to the Bar. That is being done with great success in Paris. The *Times* had a vulgar letter saying they would make eyes at the jurymen. Just as formerly women doctors were supposed to make love to their patients.

To A. P.

(?) 1909.

I am taking a turn at pure, simple, matter-of-fact history. I was reading Mignet's *History of Marie Stuart* and am engrossed in the history of Scotland. Quite apart from the fierce religious quarrels there is such a sense of proportion and fairness, such a strong and straight purpose in their politics that they give one the feeling of being supremely reliable. I wonder if you feel this about your Scotch political friends. . . . I don't see in the Government one man except John Morley who seems to me enough preoccupied with the necessity of putting his whole silent strength into constructing the best scheme possible to meet the tremendous problems of the day.

To A. P.

September 21st, 1911.

I have read your article and am perfectly delighted with it. . . . It was rather funny when the post came in I was reading a violent aristocratic manifesto of Nietzsche against democracy and felt inclined to sit with him on the top

of a pyramid and go back with him to the Egyptian theory of values, but I find it very slippery and prefer to base my political opinions on your *données.*

To A. P.

1915.

. . . It appears to me to signify so much what your generation think and there are so many people of mine I think ought to be shot! . . . *Ils savent tout mais ne connaissent rien.* . . . Never let anybody become the Great Mogul.

To A. P.

May, 1916.

. . . I like Newman's theory of spiritual development better than the theory I was made to put up with 40 years ago—Scientific development *à la* Huxley and Darwin.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMPRESS FREDERICK

This selection has been made from letters written between 1884 and 1901.

A Short Appreciation, written by Lady Ponsonby after the death of the Empress, is printed here as an Introduction to this chapter.

The Princess Royal, the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria, married the Crown Prince (Frederick William of Prussia) in 1858. When the Emperor William died in 1888, the Crown Prince had been seriously ill for some years, and only survived his succession to the throne for three months.

In 1858 Princess Royal was married at St. James's to Prince Frederick William of Prussia. The only impression he gave one at that time was that of a good-humoured, taking lieutenant, with large hands and feet, but not in the least clever.

The Princess Royal was bitterly sorry to leave England and Windsor ; the difficulty of restraining her English feelings went on all her life. Small things got on her nerves, like German boots, the want of baths, the thin silver plate, and the terrible amount of etiquette. She wanted dreadfully to love her husband's country and to get over her prejudices, but she always kept her love for England. In a letter from Potsdam in 1871, she says :

"You cannot think how dull and melancholy and queer I feel away from you all and from

beloved England! Each time I get there I feel my attachment to that precious bit of earth grow stronger and stronger. . . . Going away and returning here always causes a commotion in my feelings which want a little time and reasoning to one's self to get over."

I don't think many people could apprehend in England the sort of character and intelligence that the Empress Frederick had, because she was really not at all like an English woman. She had a keenly analytical mind like her father, and divided everything into three heads, turning them about so much that she often came to a wrong conclusion. She was always tremendously interested in big, impersonal questions, and from the very first was keen about starting various institutions in Germany. In a letter from Potsdam in 1869, she says:

"I have had a little more correspondence with Mrs. Butler lately. The Victoria Lyceum is getting on, I am happy to say. Miss Archer works very hard at it and the lecture-room is crowded. My Governesses' Home is also getting on much better, but money is always the thing in need, and it seems to me scarcer in this country than anywhere. How I wish we had a Peabody here."

It was a constant strain to the Empress, particularly in the latter years of her life, to feel that a certain amount of espionage was going on round her, and that she was never quite sure that the housemaid who was dusting the rooms was not in reality looking for some of her letters. But this all grew better after Bismarck's day was

THE EMPEROR FREDERICK WHEN CROWN PRINCE, 1887.

over. It had, however, a certain effect on her character, as it would take a tremendously strong brain to keep clear of getting influenced by a fictitious atmosphere and never to adopt the enemy's ways of proceeding. But all her life she remained one of the most undeceitful women I have ever known. I cannot say that she had the same charm as the Queen: in her great seriousness there was too much of the professor about her; all the same she was an exceptionally clever woman and wonderfully loyal to her friends.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

HOTEL AUSTRIA,
GRIES, BOTZEN, TYROL,
October 17th, 1884.

DEAREST MARY,

. . . You asked me what I thought of Mr. Gladstone when I saw him at Balmoral? I thought him, as I always do, a wonderful man for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration, and who interests me deeply, and whose society I think perfectly charming! Such knowledge, such culture, such a memory, such earnestness of purpose, and such simplicity. Alas! I fear not the right man to solve the knotty questions which, as an Empire, England has to deal with, but invaluable in stemming the tide of democracy, because, as a *true* Liberal, he has the confidence of so many thousands and is the only one who can form a bridge between the old and the new. Whether he has the keen sight, the eagle eye of the statesman, I do not know. I fear not. Whether the measures he has adopted, Land Bill, etc., were right, I dare not say. I do not feel sure.

The conscientiousness, the high and lofty aims he certainly has; but at this present moment he seems so absorbed by the wants of the lower classes and middle class, and with the tasks of giving them all they can and may safely have, that the other great problems that hurry on are scarcely treated with the care and ability they require. The East, our Colonies, our Army and our Navy must not be neglected. France and Germany are allowed to be wanting in respect, and this *never*, *never* ought to be. It is well not to be too thin-skinned, but we ought not to allow others to trifle with us!

If there is a conference at Berlin to settle, as they say, what is to become of Africa, ought England not to make the proposals and to insist on what decisions are to be taken? England is a great deal too humble to foreign Powers! They only misunderstand her. We get no thanks for our modesty and moderation. The tone of the German Press towards England, with few exceptions, is execrable, but as it is as stupid as it is insolent one had better pay no attention to it.

The Germans are always reproaching the English for having prejudices against Germany, and forget that *they* have many more and much more deeply-seated ones about other countries, especially England! They imagine England is jealous of Germany's attempting to have colonies. I am almost certain that the whole agitation about Colonial enterprise would not have been cooked up so much by the German Government if it were not a useful handle for the elections and for

securing the measure of the foundation of a line of German steam-packets which the Chancellor wants to carry. The nation is really like a child, delighted with a new toy or dainty morsel held out to it—a sugar-plum, greedily trying to snatch it and furious with anybody or anything that seems to put difficulties in the way! This Colonial sugar-plum may easily turn into a bitter almond, and the beginning seems to me sad enough if it cannot be obtained without an estrangement between England and Germany.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

POTSDAM,
May 11th, 1885.

DEAREST MARY,

Will you think me too great a bore if I ask you to help me with one or two little things I am anxious to get to complete Vicky's dressing-table set? First, a silver looking-glass frame, a largish-sized glass! Of course, the silver need only be quite thin and open-work over wood, leather or velvet. Then two nice comb-trays and two silver candlesticks, either bedroom candlesticks or tall ones. I should prefer light silver and Dutch style, as all the rest of her things are Dutch. Could you perhaps let me know the price of these objects, also of a tea-table and tea-set from Mortlock's—earthenware, *not* china, and of the new, quaint (old English) pattern, with *no* gold about it and very simple. She is wishing for something very much. I should also much like one of those oval pincushions that are in a

silver frame, like this. . . . These things I should not require till the Autumn, as I meant to give them for Christmas, but I thought it would give you more time to look about and you might hit upon these things in a second-hand shop for a reasonable price. I must ask you another favour. Here is a letter from my sister-in-law of Baden. She is anxious to have some plans of English hospitals, as you will see, but not of any *large* buildings. They are going to build a small hospital somewhere in the Grand Duchy and she would have much liked to see some of the newest plans. Can you tell me where one can get them ?

Dearest Mary, what times we are living in ! How I *do* wish you were here and we could have a good chat ! My British heart aches sadly sometimes, and one boils over with the wish to be up and doing while it is time. I quite see that we could not go to war if the question was not quite clear as to what we wanted and as to whether we were threatened or not ; but the great question at issue *is*, are we to surrender in the long run to Russia ? Is she to have what she wants in future, or not ? If she *does* succeed in getting her will it will be bad for the rest of the world. England cannot descend from her pedestal without doing harm to the causes of which she alone is the champion, *i.e.* Liberty and Progress. I go even further and I say she has *no right* to be indifferent and wavering and weak. The balance of power is thereby upset in a dangerous way. The " European Concert " seems all out of tune to

me when England does not play the first fiddle. Is Russia's advance on Herat to be a cause for war, or not? If we are to go to war I am almost sure we can do it and hold our own, defend India, make our own boundary line and keep the Russians out of Constantinople without the assistance of a continental Power. But with Turkey, Persia, China and Japan, why do we neglect to make our influence permanent in Constantinople and in Persia, as we could if we liked, and ought? Surely now we ought to continue to arm, to finish our railways in India and get our Fleet into the most efficient state possible.

I am sure you will agree with me, and not think I have become a Tory. I am as good a Liberal as you are, but I cannot forget all the duties which our position in the world imposes upon us, nor the responsibilities we have on our shoulders, and I think we ought to prove equal to the occasion in all the difficulties we encounter —as we *can*. I fear Mr. Gladstone, who is occupied with so many other vital questions and important problems, puts *these* questions away as much as he can, which is a sad pity, as they *force* themselves upon us! I want the solution of them to be in *our* hands and not in those of other powers. I do not think "Arbitration" is a happy idea, and I do not quite see how another country *can* arbitrate in this question.

You have not carried out your plan of coming here, alas! How sorry I am! The weather is dreadfully cold and wretched since a fortnight ago, and we do not know how to keep warm.

Good-bye, dearest Mary. Remember me to Sir Henry and your children.

Ever your most affectionate old friend,

VICTORIA,

Crown Princess and Princess Royal.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

POTSDAM,
May 23rd, 1885.

DEAREST MARY,

So many thanks for your dear, long letter by messenger, which so completely expresses what I feel. You know I take so passionate an interest in the progress and development of liberty and culture all over the globe that it is not without the greatest pain that I can even brook the idea of England's abdicating her legitimate part in the work of civilisation. *She has no right to do so*, and thereby do incalculable harm to the good cause and thereby to all other nations. We *can* think, I hope, and grasp the larger and wider aspect and meaning of such questions as Russian or English influence in Asia or Europe. We can also *speak* as the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Gladstone have shown. We can *write*, as our reviews give unbounded proofs. Surely we can *act* and *fight* and *shape a policy* and carry it out when the road is *so plain*. I am miserable at this hanging back. *It looks so bad!* It is so dangerous! We want influence and we must have power to use it in the interest of all that is good, and we are losing it at every turn. It is not too

late yet, but it soon will be, and we are heaping up difficulties for ourselves.

I do not the least care about the silver objects being *old*. Copies would be just as acceptable.

Ever your truly affectionate old friend,

VICTORIA,
Crown Princess and Princess Royal.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

HOTEL D'EUROPE, VENICE,
October 11th, 1885.

DEAREST MARY,

So many thanks for your dear letter just received. We are on the eve of leaving dear, lovely bewitching Venice for Potsdam. The oftener I come to Italy the more I love it and with the greater regret I leave it.

You are too kind, dearest Mary, to think of my feelings with regard to this Eastern question. I am watching all that is going on with profound anxiety and sympathy and great excitement.

I have seen some charming works, full of great talent, by a young Englishman named Logsdail (a Lincolnshire man). His sister, too, is very clever. I hope you will look at the things when they are in the Royal Academy. I also visited Mr. Luke Fildes' studio and admired *his* things and those of his brother-in-law, Mr. Woods, very much indeed. I wish you would blow their trumpets.

The state of politics in England distresses me much. I know that it is a state of transition; still, I think the experiment now being made very

bad! If democracy is to have its own way, and swamp other elements, the result can only be general mediocrity in politics as well as in everything else; whereas, *my* ideal would be for the benefit of the masses, to give the greatest influence to the most cultivated and most experienced, and yet, you well know I am a Liberal though words seem to express the wrong things now. . . .

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

BERLIN,
December 5th, 1885.

DEAREST MARY,

Many thanks for your letter of the 2nd and the enclosure of the bill. Could the other things be sent now, and the bill—*i.e.* looking-glass and pincushion?

I wish as you do, that Lord Salisbury may have a thumping majority, and for the same reason as you do. What has come to us Liberals? And yet I am quite conscious of being as good a one as ever. It only shows that we are *reflecting* ones, and cannot, out of party feeling, rush blindly after Mr. Gladstone, or Mr. Chamberlain, especially after the latter! His doctrines are rather too *raw* for me and I do not think the national stomach could quite digest them.

A Coalition Government between the moderate Liberals and the Conservatives would be the thing to be desired.

The Eastern question *does* look a little brighter, I am happy to say. I am heart and soul with the Bulgarians, and hope for an independent, united

Bulgaria in the shape of a kingdom, and unshackled by Russians or Turks. The *People* deserve and the *Prince* deserves it, and it would be a very good thing for Europe, as it would prevent the Russians from continually meddling and intriguing in the Eastern question and would leave poor old Turkey to die a natural and, I hope, a painless death, without fresh convulsions, horrors and bloodshed. Russia would have to swallow it, and Austria too. German public opinion would highly approve of it in every way. I think England would have cause to rejoice and France and Italy would not mind. These are my *private* opinions. Of course, they cannot be proclaimed on the house-tops, as the Government and Diplomacy here are obliged to study Russian susceptibilities and not to oppose her in any way. . . .

The Crown Princess to the Queen

In February, 1886, the Empress sent M. E. P. a rough copy of a letter she had written to Queen Victoria.

BERLIN,
February 19th, 1886.

Many thanks for letting me see Mary Ponsonby's remarks, which I so completely agree with. She is also *quite right* about Mr. J. Morley; and for the very reasons she mentions, I also fear he will not be of as much use as one could wish in these trying times.

I wonder why a special commission of inquiry on Irish affairs—composed of a junction of Liberals and Conservatives, of course with the

exclusion of the Parnellites—could not be called to examine thoroughly all that is so dark and complex still in the question, and propose to the Government means of reform and pacification—with the *fixed* and *decided* intention of never giving way to Parnell, Fenians, Socialists, Anarchists, Americans and priests and Home Rulers, etc., and of restoring law and order and respect for authority.

One does not feel confidence in Mr. Gladstone being perfectly certain as to what he *may* and will *not* do; in so knotty a question if one is already determined as to what *cannot* be done it clears up the problem, and it is easier then to find what *is* and ought to be done. If the advanced Radicals contemplate the possibility of an alliance with anarchists, to carry measures of reform, *all* other parties should combine against them.

I also admire many of Mr. Gladstone's great qualities very much, but should be utterly unable to follow him *blindly*, as the stable and steady elements seem so wanting in his composition, and just at present these qualities are so indispensable if one is to feel confidence in his policy. I own mine is very small.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

1886.

DEAREST MARY,

The correspondence has interested me very much. Mrs. [Humphry] Ward's letter is very good. I see she says, "We have the task to believe and live." What are we to believe, and

who sets it as a task? I think we must shape our religion, *i.e.* our minds and opinions, for ourselves, daily examining and adding to the store of what we think—improving it, deepening it, eliminating mistakes and shallowness, in short, trying to mould a philosophic soul in ourselves until our minds are in the best balance we can obtain. I say *mind*, I might say *heart*—they are all words, and only approximately express what we mean. All this religious strife and discussion is useful as a process of elucidation and education. The world has always thought on these matters, and always will. Faith is a frame of mind, and nothing else. I prefer not to stare at one point in the Heavens alone, but to look all round and take as much of it in as I can—one feels the richer and the better, and consequently, the happier for it, but then I am not anybody else. It often gives me pleasure, however, to see the same feeling expressed in books by others, and see how very natural it is.

Please excuse my boring you with all this.

Your very affectionate and admiring old friend,

V.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

BERLIN,
March 4th, 1886.

DEAREST MARY,

So many affectionate thanks for your letter just received. I am quite of your opinion about Ireland. A strong, personal rule *must* be come to if civil war and a sort of revolution

in England are not to be the inevitable consequence of giving way to the Parnellites. Mr. Gladstone is so noble a man and thorough an idealist that perhaps *à force de vouloir être juste* and of the conscientious desire to do all that fairness *can* to conciliate the Irish and redress former wrongs and present grievances, he may forget *whom* he has to deal with. Fenians, who, if they get the upper hand, will work ruin and destruction on the country the Government are bound to protect, and who will let loose the corresponding party of evil in England, Socialists and Communists with their train of roughs, and we shall find ourselves with a re-conquest of Ireland on our hands and *vis-à-vis* of a rising in England, which will do incalculable damage and not be put down without having to proceed to the extremest measures. All this can still be avoided if only Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Morley have their eyes open and their liberality and sense of justice and desire for conciliation do not take the form of *fanatical blindness.* Oh, if one could only *warn* them! All the world will see that they have honestly tried to introduce a scheme of pacification in which they *believe* and have *failed*, which will prove that the wild party who now rule, *i.e.* terrorise, Ireland *will not* be pacified and that *no* Government can satisfy them. There remains nothing else to be done than to conquer them and liberate Ireland from their yoke. A Tory Government would never have had the credit of a real desire to concede the utmost of what dare be conceded. The Liberals, at least, if they *have* to

employ force, can do so with a thoroughly good conscience.

All temporising with anarchy is criminal weakness, abandoning the sheep to the wolves and damaging in every way the cause of *true* liberty! Peace-loving, order-loving, law-loving people have a right to be protected from anarchy, in which the poor would fare no better than the rich. Things have come to a pitch where it appears to me that there is not much choice left. For an oppressed people to make a revolution is excusable, but for a free people it is a disgrace.

I am still very, very anxious about Bulgaria. But, thank God! the Peace is now signed. Few people in the world have gone through what Prince Alexander has had to struggle with in *every* shape and form. My admiration for him increases every day. As a patriot, a soldier, and a statesman, he has shown an energy, patience, perseverance, modesty and moderation such as one has rarely seen and which one can only find in the perfect gentleman. And he owes it to *himself* alone, as he has hardly anyone about him with whom he could share the responsibility. He *deserves* to be successful and to be happy. May he be so! I tremble for his safety and for the difficult time he will still have to fight through before his enemies learn to *let him alone* and do him justice, and before his country and his own position are safe from the plots and intrigues which are still so rife against them. He and his cause indeed deserve sympathy and support from

all well-minded people, and it is only the wilfully prejudiced who can find anything to blame in his conduct, or those under the direct influence of the lies and calumnies of his bitter enemies.

Dearest Mary, do you know the Bishop of London [Temple] ? I do *not*, but I am so anxious, if I *could* without delay, to have the name of Mr. Dacre Craven put before him for the living of St. Martin's now vacant. I take a great interest in him, as he is so hard-working and the husband of Florence Lees, and they do so much work amongst the poor. Do you know any way of approaching the Bishop of London about this ? Could you speak to him ? . . .

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

BERLIN,
January 22nd, 1887.

DEAREST MARY,

So many thanks for your charming letter by messenger. Will you please thank your husband for his. I do not wish to bore him, or needlessly to occupy his precious time. Do tell him that if the Queen will go to Birmingham, and if he thinks it the most important of the two, all is well. Perhaps Manchester could be done *next* year. The important thing *is* that these large towns should be visited and noticed and the loyalty kept alive, which is such a precious thing and which is always heightened by the people having an opportunity of seeing the Queen.

I think your husband's answer to Morier *so excellent*. It is more or less of a puzzle to me, how

Morier could embroil and entangle and complicate the simple, strong and dignified position the British Ambassador at Petersburg ought to have. Petersburg and Constantinople are the two places where most can be done for our interests, and, alas! last year *both* seemed to be hopelessly in the wrong hands.

I suppose Prince Bismarck was not wrong when he once said to me, "A man is only worth what remains of him when you subtract his personal vanity from the rest." Personal vanity when very strong is certainly most dangerous, and this is poor Morier's stumbling-block. . . .

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

HOTEL D'EUROPE, VENICE,
October 5th, 1887.

DEAREST MARY,

So many thanks for your kind and dear letter which I received three days ago, and which was a real comfort to me. Thanks, too, for the drawings of the hall-table. If the one with the twisted legs is still to be had when I return to Berlin I should very much like to buy it, but just now, while we are knocking about, it would be no use to send it, I think. Perhaps the man could put it away till then, and it would be paid for as soon as it was sent.

I wish you were here with us at Venice! How I should like to go about with you, and we should both never cease *admiring*. I have to bottle up my enthusiasm a good deal so as not to bore my fellow-travellers, who cannot share it. I am not

able to enjoy things as usual, nor with as light a heart, as the Crown Prince is, of course, unable to be out much, and may not speak, though, alas! *he will not obey* the strict injunctions of the doctor, and refrain from using his voice more than a very little! It is very difficult in a town, and going about, which, of course, amuses and interests him.

We are going to Baveno to-morrow and trust we may have a fortnight's fine weather.

I miss the walks and the pure air, the delicious pine-woods and *splendid* scenery of Teblach, even here, in *lovely* Venice.

Dr. [Morell] Mackenzie is satisfied, *on the whole*, but evidently the tendency to catch cold and the delicacy of the throat are very great. The *slightest* thing causes swelling and congestion, pain and hoarseness, and, of course, retards and impedes progress. This makes the Crown Prince much more depressed, impatient and fidgety than he need be, and incessant letters from Berlin, impressing the "necessity" of returning to Germany, and the bad impression produced by our absence, are very galling.

Count Radolinski writes to me that people put the blame on me for keeping my husband away from home. I answered that I thought such criticism was as unjust and ignorant as it was spiteful and impertinent—no, really. "*Travailler pour le Roi de Prusse*" is a good French saying, for I am weary of being constantly blamed and picked to pieces by people who have no right and no business to meddle in our affairs. Whenever

anything is wrong, it does not matter *what* it be, it is put on *my* back. The Court and official world find me a very convenient scapegoat. It is rather flattering in one way, as it shows they think me too good-natured to be likely to pay them out some day. Most of these amiable people are not worth knocking down, even if one had the power of distributing a few *coups de poing*. Of kind and good friends I have so many in other circles that I really do not mind; but at times I feel the *ingratitude* I meet with very bitterly, as I am conscious of trying to be as civil and courteous to everyone at Berlin as I can; of trying to do a good turn to people *whenever* I am able, and of trying to please: but there are those who *will not* be pleased I am an English woman, suspected of Liberal, of free-thinking and artistic tendencies; of cosmopolitan and humanitarian sentiments and the like abominations in the eyes of Bismarck; so I am labelled "suspicious" and "dangerous" by the clique who are all-powerful now. I cannot help it. I keep as quiet and make myself as small as I can, but I cannot change my skin to please them, nor shall they tread me underfoot, as they would like to some day.

After all, it is only *sometimes* that I boil over with annoyance, as I usually feel how many greater and better and more useful people than I am have been continually attacked and abused and more from ignorance than evil intention. So one ought to make every allowance for people's different tactics, views and opinions. "*Tout*

comprendre c'est tout pardonner," and one *must* learn the hard lesson of being tolerant to the intolerant, which I try very hard to learn. . . .

M. E. P. to H. F. P.

During a visit to San Remo in response to a telegram asking her to come out at the time when the Crown Princess was particularly distracted by the variety of medical opinion over the treatment of the Crown Prince. The English and the German doctors were perpetually at variance.

HOTEL MEDITERRANEE,
December 3rd, 1887.

Just returned from dining at the Villa Zirio with the Crown Prince and Princess and seventeen at dinner. We were—let me see—Bruhl, Perpignan and four princesses, self and Maggie and Mlle. B., the governess, made nine women ; Crown Prince, Prince Henry, his equerry Seckendorff, Von Rabe (a mysterious man in spectacles), our Seckendorff, and a small, dark English doctor were the party. I sat next the Crown Prince, who looked beautiful, with a fresh colour and a good appetite and whom I had the greatest difficulty to prevent talking. They, Bruhl, Perpignan and Seckendorff, went to see Rossi act in *Kean* with three princesses and Maggie. She (Mags) has been playing the fiddle with Prince Henry all the afternoon, accompanied by Princess Victoria. They are delighted with her. The Crown Princess thinks her so much like Mama ! . . .

Just received your letter of the 2nd. I wonder if the various postcards we dropped at every post office reached you ? No, the doubt

was whether we should sleep two nights at Marseilles, but as the start was not till eleven we started easily. Long walk in prospect to-morrow, so must go to bed. *Revers de la médaille* to-day for weather. I stayed at home and lit the fire as I have a cold and it drizzled all day.

M. E. P.

P.S.—I have just had a long visit from Baron Roggenbach, an old friend of the Prince and Stockmar, and one of the few people the Crown Princess really trusts. He says he was almost the first to be alarmed about the Crown Prince and told me the history of the case from the beginning. Whatever his opinion is of M. Mackenzie *at home*, and it does not seem to be favourable, he thinks he has behaved honourably and straightforwardly here. He quite agrees with him that the operation at any time was out of the question whether the evil were cancer or no, so that he (M. M.) was justified in saying, so far as evidence went at first, there was nothing to prove it to be malignant. He never disguised from the Crown Princess it might become so. R. told me a great deal more, but post is going. Crown Princess here for a little and took Maggie with her and Princess Victoria. We dine there to-night.

Must just add that I think Roggenbach quite the most shrewd German I have seen with them. At this moment he says it is a case of surprise, general health and colour *excellent* and each day better. At all events, the mischief is *not* progressing, tell Jenner.

M. E. P.

M. E. P. to H. F. P.

SAN REMO,
December 15th, 1887.

I wrote you a hasty postcard last night as I had written a long despatch to your Chief. Maggie and I explored the town again this morning and met the Crown Princess searching for borders for the Prison curtains between the two prisons. Will you ask Heather to measure the quantity wanted. The old serge ones are worn out and the Crown Princess suggests blue stuff like the French greatcoats are made of, very cheap, and I can get it in Paris as I pass through. I want the width and height of both dark green serge curtains, and settle with Heather that I should order the stuff and the trimming and send him the bill.

The Crown Princess told me they had a journey *orageuse*. I went to see her this afternoon and she was much preoccupied and very anxious. She said it was impossible to say what it was to be surrounded by reporters and spies of every description.

Our winter has consisted of slight storms of rain and certainly a cold wind for twenty-four hours. But it was lovely again to-night and we are going this time *after* dinner. We were virtuous to-night and dined at the *table d'hôte*, and not separately as we were at home. But six o'clock in winter when there is no going out afterwards is too early for comfort. I shall be very sorry to

leave this, though delighted to see you and the family at Osborne. . . .

Yours,
M. E. P.

M. E. P. to H. F. P.

San Remo,
December 19th, 1887.

I fairly struck work yesterday and to-day and I think the Crown Princess was a little sour at being made to come out with her very bad cold, but I simply was *afraid* if I dawdled about and took remedies in this change of weather. Besides, with the Crown Princess you lose all count of time. She says "Ten minutes in the sun," and you get an hour-and-a-half climbing. Believe me, there is only one safe place—bed, so a message found me there this morning, and she came to see me this afternoon, the first blowy and rainy day. I promised to be fit to-morrow, and thanks to my being a *douillette*, I shall resume work without gloom. We have come on the *rez de chaussée* floor, as Princess Charlotte comes to-morrow and Prince Henry wanted her in his passage. . . .

The Crown Prince is decidedly better to-day—if the attack is slight it will show that gradual improvement may be expected.

Yours,
M. E. P.

M. E. P. to H. F. P.

SAN REMO,
December, 1887.

Since Princess Charlotte's arrival, Maggie and I have dined steadily at the *table d'hôte* and gone there in the evening. I declare I think the unfairness about the Crown Princess is unbearable. The German Press all adopt the tone that the real truth is kept back, and if she quotes Dr. Kranse (the German doctor here who works with Hovell) they say that he has been won over. Bismarck (*the old one*) and the Emperor and Empress are kind, which helps her. The Crown Prince trusts implicitly in her, so that is a great compensation, but the "*Hochements de tête*" of the children, Henry and the little ones, the *visage d'événement* of Bruhl irritate me, I don't think M. Mackenzie has entered into all the details with Reid. Hovell gave me a long, detailed account which with Roggenbach's and the Crown Princess's I have written out while I remember it all.

The Queen's letter is very interesting. I think she has been *envénimée* against M. M. by Uncle, who is in charge of his nephew William and thinks and says the English doctor is only trying to feather his nest. Yesterday was the first day she broke down before me. She is generally in apparent excellent spirits, though preoccupied at times: but yesterday it was too much to find him reading a recapitulation of the doctor's former opinion, with a paragraph pointing out the difference between this and the present bulletins and leaving their readers to make their own

inference. The poor Crown Prince turned to her and said, "Why will they take every ray of hope away? What good is done them by this?" and pointed to the paragraph. She was quite cheerful to him and then came into the next room where I was and cried. She is so wonderful generally that it fills one with pity. The Crown Prince was full of chaff last night, taking off Maggie, delighted with the thought of the children's enjoyment of the Christmas tree.

I don't know why the Queen thought I was coming back for Christmas.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

VILLA ZIRIO, SAN REMO,
February 8th, 1888.

DEAREST MARY,

. . . I am again very anxious and *much* tormented because tracheotomy is pending, and you can imagine *how I hate* the thought of this detestable operation, but if the difficulty of breathing continues and even increases, what else can be done? It makes me miserable, however, that my poor darling should have all this to go through without one's being able to take it away from him, which I gladly would.

As for the subterranean *war* in the household, I have heard nothing lately. Count R—— is a kind-hearted, amiable and intelligent man, most devoted to us, but *not* judicious—violent, credulous (like a baby), excitable, talks too much and is in consequence often led and *not* by the best people. This makes it a *danger*, because he is

most imprudent, though he means very well. His intentions at Berlin now are the best, and he only wishes to keep the Emperor and the Chancellor in a good humour about us and satisfied with the treatment the Crown Prince is undergoing. How much mischief may be made by the letters written *to* him (Count R——) from *here*, I cannot tell, nor could I prevent it. I simply ignore all these *les êmes* and listen to nothing. I wish we were over this next month or two.

The weather is often delicious now, but, of course, I am unable to make excursions in the present state of things.

Good-bye, dear, kind Mary—with much love to Maggie,

Ever your truly devoted friend,

V.

P.S.—You have no doubt read the publication of the German-Austrian Treaty of Alliance. If England and Italy *would* only join and make Turkey join, Roumania and Serbia would follow, and I do not see how Russia could possibly think of making war. France would be *too* glad *not* to be drawn into a war and there would be no bloodshed at all! It would, in short, be a *Peace League*, so strong that no one would attempt to go against it. Bulgaria could gain her independence so hardly tried for, and would be virtually lost to Russia and the door *closed* to Constantinople. This would be a *safe* and *common-sense* policy, which I think all Liberal Unionists would be ready to support. It would

liberate Europe from the harassing, terrifying spectre of war, which seems to stop progress and hamper trade in so many ways.

To help and support *Austria* and not *Russia* in the East is surely more in the interests both of England and Italy and would assure the peaceful development of the Danubian Principalities—rich and fertile countries kept back so long because threatened continually with war. They would get on *wonderfully* fast if the Russian agents ceased trying to revolutionise the country and stir up and ferment risings. I hope for the sake of Greece, too, that some day Austria and *not* Russia will take the Turk's place. The so-called balance of power would be greatly benefited and *trade* in every way.

From the Crown Princess to M. E. P.

Villa Zirio, San Remo,
March 7th, 1888.

Dearest Mary,

I have been longing to write to you for such a time and have never had a minute. Of course, you know all the news I send from here through the Queen. Again as before, the German medical authorities have given the very worst verdict; again it seems to us to lack convincing power, as so many signs of which they affirm are wanting. They base all on their newest microscopic examinations—to which *we* are to trust, seeing that what Virchow so explicitly said so *short* a time ago in no way corresponds with what Waldeger now says. I am more troubled and

distressed than I can say—quite miserable sometimes, and yet I cannot bring myself to see things irrevocably in the very worst light, there are so many "ifs" and "buts."

I think my dear husband's general condition much improved these last few days; though that odious bleeding goes on, and the nights are much broken. His appetite is really improving and he looks much better.

We are rather alarmed about the Emperor this afternoon as he is said to be weaker than usual. Heaven grant that we need not be whisked off to Germany where it is terribly cold now. The Crown Prince has not sufficiently recovered to be able to bear the strain of all the business and responsibility which would suddenly fall upon him, and my anxiety would increase tenfold, as you can imagine.

This is not a very cheerful letter, but I am really oppressed with all these cares and anxieties and long for a ray of hope and light in all this darkness.

Good-bye, dearest Mary. How I wish I could have a good chat with you! Best love to Maggie.

Ever your truly devoted old friend,

VICTORIA,
Crown Princess.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

Queen Victoria went to Germany to see the Empress Frederick. This letter from Her Majesty was given to Henry Ponsonby to deliver on his return.

CHARLOTTENBURG,
April 26th, 1888.

DEAREST MARY,

I know you will excuse my writing in pencil, but I am sitting by the Emperor's bedside and do not like to move for fear of waking him out of a little doze into which he has fallen.

I *cannot* let your husband go home without taking you a line from your very devoted friend. *What* a happiness it was, in all that misery, to catch a glimpse of the Queen! Her visit went off so well that I think she was pleased—in spite of the gloom and sadness which pervades everything, to see what pleasure her visit gave.

I cannot speak of my own sufferings and trials, they are too great to mention lightly, but to you who understand it all, and feel for me, I would fain say all. You know all the circumstances that make my fate *so* hard. I have not the heart to speak of the future. It has only terrors for me. But, dearest Mary, it is always a great and blessed comfort to think of one's friends, and I fancy you and your two dear girls up in your tower, and long to peep in for a moment. I still hope you will come and pay me a visit in Germany, and you know that *whenever* it be and *wherever* we meet, it is always true happiness to me.

Your husband saw the window [a memorial

window to Lord Ampthill] in the Church, and he also saw the Governesses' Home (which was very good of him). He saw our dear patient to-day for a moment.

Good-bye, dearest Mary. God bless you. Best love to Maggie, and many messages to both your sisters from

Your truly affectionate,

VICTORIA.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

After the death of the Emperor Frederick.

FRIEDRICHS KRON, POTSDAM,
September 15*th*, 1888.

DEAREST, KIND MARY,

How can I thank you enough for your dear letter? If I have not written to you yet, it is because there was too much to say. I cannot lend words to a grief such as mine without an outburst, which makes me unfit to be with others or to do what I have to do. I knew *you* could guess and feel and understand from afar what torture I am going through and what the bitterness of such affliction is.

The kind sympathy my dear, kind friends have shown me *does* help me on a great deal, and I am *very* grateful for it. When we meet, dearest Mary—perhaps this Autumn, in November, it will indeed be sad, but it will also be a great comfort to see you again and to talk as we did at San Remo, when I still hoped against hope that things might be well, though I knew what the chances most likely were.

From the Empress Frederick to H. F. P.

Königliches Schloss, Kiel,
March 8th, 1889.

Dear Sir Henry,

So many thanks for your kind letter by messenger.

As you are an old friend, I feel I can speak openly on the subject of the Emperor's visit to England. Of course, the visit *must* be paid, as he had been to other courts *before*, which I thought very uncivil, as England ought to have been the *first* visit. The other ones were paid at a time which I could not help thinking contrary to all good taste and good feeling, and which gave me great pain.

It is devoutly to be wished that the relations between England and Germany and also between the two Cabinets should be as good, as cordial, and as confidential as possible. No one wishes this more ardently than I do, in the interests of peace and of both countries, but I consider the benefit England thus confers should be *merited*.

My own little personal standpoint is quite subordinate to all other considerations, but I cannot forget the insolent boast of Herbert Bismarck, that it did not matter *how* they treated *me*, that it would make no difference in the relations between Germany and England. Indeed, these would *improve*, as the Emperor Frederick and I would not be there to misrepresent the Germany of Bismarck, which was the only one England really cared about. My son expressed himself

not dissimilarly, and it is *not* unnatural that I should feel that they would naturally behave *better* to me if they *knew* and felt that their ways have not been altogether admired in England, and that *insults*, injuries and calumnies heaped upon me have not passed unnoticed in the land of my birth, to which the Emperor Frederick was so truly devoted.

If *ample* apologies are offered to the Prince of Wales for the outrageous rudeness with which my son behaved to him, I shall be the first to rejoice. *No* redress has been given *me* and no excuses have been made to me for the *incited* language of the official Press. The accusations publicly launched out against me have *not* been withdrawn, explained or smoothed away, so I cannot be expected to forgive and forget them or make any allowances for those who have gained their point and done me so much harm.

It is represented to my son by those about him in power that his behaviour towards me is *patriotic*, and has been understood in England. His reception in England will, of course, tend to strengthen and confirm that belief unless it is possible to find a means of letting him know the contrary—in a roundabout way, either through Count Hatzfeldt, or through Sir E. Malet; but, of course, this would have to be very judiciously done, with tact and caution, but *then* it *might* do *good*, and bring people to their senses and make them *reflect* on the effect which their . . .

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

Schloss, Homburg, v.d. Höhe,
May 17th, 1889.

Dearest Mary,

So many thanks for your dear letter of the 14th, I am *very* glad for *you* that both your dear boys are in the Guards now, but I grieve selfishly over the necessity (which I fully understand) of your having to give up your journey to Germany this summer. I had so much looked forward to your coming.

Many thanks, too, for ordering the lamp, which I hope and trust the Queen will like and will use. It is sure to be pretty if you have chosen it.

As to poor Sir Morell Mackenzie: I am sure all you say is quite right and I understand it perfectly. The *disastrous* thing for *me* and for my whole cause is the way in which Bergmann and Gerhardt are fêted by their English colleagues. These I now know behaved *shamefully* to my husband and to me, and have done us all the harm they could and have abetted and aided all the endeavours to injure *me*, both with my son and the German public, which were made by the Bismarcks—father and son and their *whole* family —and the *present* Court.

I am now constantly told that the English public and medical profession are *quite* on the side of Bergmann and of Gerhardt, who, though State employees, in *my eyes* in no way represent *German* science, as we have many *far* better and more eminent men. *This* I am *sure* you will understand, and feel how painful the effect is for *me*.

As you say (and I fully believe), the quickness to take offence in official and professional circles is so great, and the *jealousy*, too, that Sir Morell's unpopularity is *not* due to his devotion to us, but the sad part *is*, that throughout Germany, the official world has been led to believe that the English surgeons entirely disagree with him and *dispute* his *skill* and his *experience*. My three eldest children have run away with this notion and think their father has been sacrificed to my *entêtement* and that the disapproval of Sir Morell by all his English colleagues (and, as they maintain, by the Queen and Prince of Wales) is a *proof* of how right they are. This is quite terrible for me, I assure you, and it widens a gulf which is already too wide between these young people and me and weakens my position *vis à vis* of them.

Miss Green [who had been governess in the German Royal Household] is now in London and always to be found at the Alexandra Club, 12, Grosvenor Street, in case you might like to see her. She can give you the latest news of us all. As soon as she has found the work she is in search of, she will be able to undertake the secretaryship of our Berlin home for English and American Governesses, which I am sure she will do very well. I miss her very much indeed. . . .

The country is looking *lovely* now, but when I see all the flowers blooming with which I used to fill my dearest one's room last year, it makes my heart ache *so bitterly*. I miss so cruelly having nothing more to do for him, and being so useless to everyone is a dreadfully depressing feeling.

No one from Berlin has as much as even inquired after me since I left a month ago: not a line, not a word reaches me. However, that is not the hardest part of all I have to bear.

My eyes and my head are better, also my throat, and I hope to be quite right in a few days. But the elasticity and energy and vitality of old days are gone, and I feel like a miserable rag of my former self.

My future home is a great interest to me, and the view from there is particularly smiling and cheerful—the plain dotted with towns and villages and the hills nearer by, with little villas and innumerable orchards. It is a great place for cider. I do so hope the Queen will come and see it some day.

Good-bye, dearest Mary, best love to your dear girls from me and mine. I often hear Vicky say with a deep sigh, "Oh, how I *wish* Maggie were here!"

Ever your truly devoted, but sorrowing old friend,

VICTORIA,
Empress Frederick.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

Maggie Ponsonby had been invited over to Germany for the wedding of Princess Victoria to Prince Adolphe of Schaumburg Lippe.

BERLIN,
December 3rd, 1890.

DEAREST MARY,

I cannot let your dear Maggie return to England without a few lines from me. It was

indeed a pleasure to see the dear girl; it seemed like a little bit of you.

Now my child has left I feel more lonely than I can describe, and miss her so much. I am much relieved and grateful to see that her letters are more cheerful now, and that she is beginning to enjoy herself. I think a wedding trip will be the very best thing for them both. It throws them so much together, whereas if he had gone back to his service directly, she would have been alone all day and have felt the separation from us and her home much more. It was really dreadful to part from her. Maggie will tell you how well she looked at her wedding.

The weather has been *too* horrid. You know how I feel and dread the cold, and it has begun so very badly this year.

Here everyone is much excited about Professor Koch's wonderful discovery. The Press and the public commit great follies, and the *rush* of people who come here cannot do any good as it is utterly impossible to content them all, and they cannot get the lymph so quickly, and ought not to begin to treat people in a hurry without having thoroughly studied the matter and watched the cases for some time. The application of this method is by no means so simple and easy and the *ultimate* results are still *uncertain*, though the immediate effect of the remedy is very powerful. It simply destroys the tissue which harbours the bacillus, and this tissue has to be eliminated from the human organism. Whether this can be done over and over again is doubtful, as the effect ceases

after a certain time. Whether the bacillus is rendered harmless for a *long while* or *for ever* is not known, and experience will have to show.

All the delicacy and weakness and tendency to phthisis *must* continue to be treated as heretofore, and, of course, winter resorts and Consumption Hospitals will lose none of their importance: on the contrary, as I should think this treatment could only be carried out satisfactorily at such places and under constant, careful supervision.

But now I must say good-bye, dearest Mary. God bless you. I hope I shall be able to go over to England early in March. How much I am longing to see you again!

Ever your truly affectionate and devoted old friend,

VICTORIA,
Empress Frederick.

I do not speak of the weight of sadness and sorrow which always weighs upon me, nor of all the bitterness which I cannot get over, and which is so often called forth again by the events of the day. All this I must bear in silence and solitude.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

SCHLOSS, HOMBURG, V.D. HOHE,
April 22nd, 1891.

DEAREST MARY,

What will you think of my not having yet answered your dear and kind letter after you had been to San Remo? It touched me *so* much. Let me thank you a thousand times, both for having gone there and for having written to me.

It was a comforting thought to me that you *had* been there, and seen all the places which I *so constantly* see before me in thought, whilst my memory carries me over and over again through each day and hour I spent there, and each minute little detail seems engraved on my mind with *such* pain and *such* longing: the dear, blue sea; the two palms in front of his window; the balcony where he used to sit; the road up to the Villa, the anemones and cactus before the door; the white rose trained over the wall of the house; his sitting-room, our bedroom, the room downstairs where we had our last Christmas Eve. It was such a dear little home and I liked it so much and we were so comfortable in it. *How* we were persecuted and tormented often! I am afraid I have not forgiven or forgotten all that, nor has anything been done to make me forget it. That you should remember that time so faithfully and tenderly is a great comfort to me, as your visit was *then* to me an inestimable comfort for which I shall ever remain grateful and of which I love to think.

During the latter part of my stay in London there was such a hurry and bustle and so much to be done that I could not write as I wanted to do. I am sure you are enjoying lovely Florence, so associated for me with dear friends that are no more. Its art treasures are glorious, are they not? The whole of dear Italy is a *picture*, a dream of beauty and an inexhaustible mine of interest; at least, so it is to *me*, and my enthusiasm grows instead of diminishing.

We have had the most *wretched* weather, north-east gales and perishing cold, not a gleam of sun, etc.; but now it is beginning to mend, and I trust by the time you come the country will be looking a little better. On the 29th I am going to Berlin, but shall be here again on the 2nd of May. Is it the first or second week of May I may hope to see you?

I hope your dear girls are enjoying themselves and that they have been feeling well all the time and had no bad colds.

My place is getting on slowly and I am very anxious to show it to you, even now, in its unfinished state. There is an immense deal to do and to think of, and I see that we shall *not* get in next Spring—perhaps in the course of next *Summer*.

To-day is my darling Margaret's birthday. I can hardly believe she is nineteen, it seems so strange.

Victoria and her husband are here for two or three days on their first visit. It is such joy to see her again and looking happy and contented, though not as well as I could wish.

The Queen will be leaving Grasse now, but I send this letter there, thinking Sir Henry will send it on to its destination. Good-bye, dearest Mary. God bless you.

Your truly devoted and affectionate old friend,

VICTORIA,
Empress Frederick.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

SCHLOSS, KIEL,
March 25th, 1898.

DEAREST MARY,

. . . I can picture to myself your little abode and fancy it *must* be pretty, as you have the taste and knack and talent of arranging—the gift of touching your surroundings with a fairy wand and making them artistic, interesting and original. . . .

As for me, I have not much to tell you. I do not know how I should have got through the weary, dismal winter at Berlin had not my Mossy * been there with her dear husband and sweet little children that I dote on. *Pour le reste*, life is sadder to me there than anywhere. My ideas and opinions are so utterly different from what the Government, Court and Official world think that it is not without constant sorrow and anxiety and disappointment that I watch what is going on. My own personal friends have dropped into the background, are dead, or silent, or have gone away, and from those in other circles who think as I do I am shut off, so my loneliness is great. It is not at all true that I held Court for the Emperor and Empress. I have given dinners. I always do when I stay longer at Berlin and have seen a good many people. Of course, I follow closely all that happens, but I am not in touch with the official world, though I meet them often.

I saw very, very little of my son, who rarely,

* Princess Margaret married, in 1893, Prince Frederick Charles of Hesse.

THE EMPRESS FREDERICK, 1898.

if ever, comes to see me, even when I am ill. I suffered agonies of neuralgia and toothache, but feel the change here is doing me good, though we have the most terrible weather you can imagine.

The news from Henry is good. He is at Hong Kong at this moment. Irene and the two children are well and will be going to England in May. On the second of April I shall go to Bonn, to my darling Vicky. She is arranging her house there, but both she and her husband cannot get over Detmold ; no more can I. I shall stay for a short while at Pumpenheim before taking up my quarters at Friedrichshof where I expect to be on the 2nd of May. How I *long* to show it to you and Maggie! Perhaps next year ?

I wish indeed we could have a good talk on politics. There is *so* much to say. The attacks on Lord Salisbury are a bit unjust. What pain it is to see this miserable Turkey with a Government which represents *murder* and iniquity bolstered up and put on her legs again! I can hardly trust myself to say what I think!

Whether I shall see my beloved Greek children this year or not I really do not know, but feel how true are the words, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

While I am writing the gale is raging—snow and hail driving past and the harbour a sheet of spray. It is bitterly cold besides.

Good-bye, dearest Mary. Once more thanking you for your kind letter and rejoicing at the news it contains, with best love to Maggie,

Ever your truly affectionate and devoted old friend,

V.,
Empress Frederick.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

SCHLOSS FRIEDRICHSHOF,
CRONBERG, TAUNUS,
June 9th, 1899.

DEAREST MARY,

Your very kind and dear letter, which touched me so much, of the 31st of May only reached me to-day. In answer to your sympathising and kind inquiries, I can tell you that people think me looking very well. I have carefully avoided all unnecessary and extra exertions, so cannot say how I should stand them. I think there *is* an increase of pain and discomfort, but this seems to progress very slowly, so that I must be very grateful. I rarely have a good night and often am much depressed, though I try to treat my troubles with contempt and go on to appear as if nothing were the matter. There is a great deal to do—and my time is fully occupied. What saddens me is the thought that there are so many things I *ought* to do and to look after and could help on, whereas perhaps the sun will set on the scene before the work has been got on with. However, one must always hope that the chances are in favour of *some* time being left me yet in which to work.

I have been intensely interested in the Dreyfus case, as you know, and rejoiced most heartily at

the newest development; but I own I feel anxious about the Court Martial, which is to be held at Rennes, as there is no knowing *what* trick may not be played and what subterfuges resorted to by his enemies. One can say of those generals that are not downright villains, such as Du Paty du Clam and Mercier, or unscrupulous as Boisdeffre —but who, out of mistaken patriotism, think an error *must* be upheld—that "Faith unfaithful makes them falsely true." The behaviour of the Royalists is too foolish for words.

I must end here, dearest Mary. Once more thanking you for your precious and cheering sympathy,

I remain,

Ever your dearest old friend,

VICTORIA,

Dowager Empress Frederick.

From the Empress Frederick to M. E. P.

THE MARIGOLA,
December 12th, 1899.

DEAREST MARY,

Do forgive me for not having answered your dear, kind letter before—written on my birthday, a day which, alas! means to you all that is most terrible and most sad—the anniversary of the grief which has made your life another for ever and has taken away, with its chief purpose, all the hopes and joys it once possessed. You know how I *do* and how I can feel for you, dearest Mary. I rarely open the flood-gates of all the pain and bitterness, the stinging regrets that fill

my soul, and pour out to anyone else all that surges so mightily within. I am sure this is the same with you, and yet one has to drag on and the world is still full of interest and the fate and well-being of those we love are intensely absorbing to us. So one lives on—a diminished and crippled existence, but still ready to do what is possible for the happiness of others, and still able to rejoice in what is beautiful and great and true and noble; still anxious for ideals to be realised and eager to see the right triumph and truths to be recognised, wrongs redressed, and suffering relieved as much as can be. How more than delightful it would be if you could come to this part of the world! I shall be here till the middle of February, at any rate. Perhaps you could find lodgings in some little house nearby? If not, there are fine and comfortable hotels at La Spezia—"Grace di Malta," for instance (though not at all smart, or like Nice or Mentone), and in twenty minutes the steam launch brings you to our door. . . .

This war is indeed a tremendous struggle. I wish we could have realised *sooner* that it had to come and that it was blowing up for a storm in South Africa for some years. The Jameson Raid was only a sign of what was going on, and the way in which it was received in Germany was also but a sign of the deep-seated intrigues and agitation the Kruger and Leyds party had been organising for their own ends, *i.e.* turning England out of South Africa altogether and establishing a large Africander Republic; perhaps with Germany's help, or, at any rate, the plan was

made by Leyds and actively and astutely pursued. Our dear, kind Mr. Gladstone little knew what he was doing when he gave so much independence to the Transvaal, and it was a mistake, years ago, not to take Delagoa Bay, when we could have had it without trouble. I am afraid that the Transvaal and the rest of Europe, too, thought we were not in earnest and would be easily driven out soon. The underlying question was so much deeper than the one seemingly at issue about the franchise and Uitlander grievance—which Lord Salisbury's Government sought to settle peacefully and with no end of patience and good temper, and which Sir A. Milner and Mr. Chamberlain certainly tried to bring about to the utmost of their powers. It was a sad pity that 100,000 men were not *immediately* considered the smallest force that could grapple with the Boers, and that in consequence we began the war at so great a disadvantage to ourselves, not being nearly strong enough. Hence our terrible losses and the fearful sacrifice of life. But the troops and their conduct and bearing and the spirit which animates them seem to me beyond praise and such as hardly any other nation could show under *such* trying circumstances. I own I feel the greatest pride and admiration when I think of what they had done. War is an awful school, and many a lesson has to be learnt and an experiment made. The three garrisons of Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith must have had a terrible time of it, and one is longing with untold impatience to hear of their relief. Lord Methuen, Colonel Baden

Powell, General Gatacre, and all the rest, have done so well and all the others too, and we shall hear of Sir R. Buller's deeds before long, I am sure.

I was very glad my son's visit to Windsor went off well. I own the thought of the reception there, etc., was very sad and painful, and many a thrust and a stab did it give me to read all in the newspapers. For Germany and England to go together—it would want the *undoing* of Prince Bismarck's work of *brouille* at which he was such a master. He wanted distress and enmity, and he *knew* how little political understanding and independent opinion there is in Germany and kept waving before their eyes to *madden* them, the red flag of England's enmity and falseness, greed and ambition, etc. The seed Prince Bismarck sowed for years is now springing up. Who shall unravel the tissue of falsehoods and intrigues with which German public opinion has been worked upon and is hoodwinked. The "envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness" has taken root and the disgusting and disgraceful attitude of the whole German Press during this Transvaal crisis is the consequence. I cannot tell you how hard it is to bear. The continual abuse showered on *everything* English *every* day makes me so savage that it scatters all my tolerance, philosophy and patience to the winds, and I long to be a man sometimes and *knock someone down.* There really are limits even to forbearance. Still, I think the Governments and official relations will be all right together for a time.

About my own health you are kind enough to ask. I was feeling seedy all the summer and my nerves a good bit tried. The evil at this moment is not very active and has not made much progress, and the pain is only bad *at times*. Still, being generally weakened has made me take this dreadful attack of lumbago which has now lasted *ten weeks!* I have suffered terrible pain, and these last few days it has been particularly acute. Till last week I have always been able to walk—only not to turn in bed—*now* I cannot sit down or get up alone. I am shoved into bed and lugged out again. No medicine or application seems to be of any use, nor electricity applied every day, either.

The weather this last fortnight has been very unfavourable. The last three days we have had high N.-E. winds, frost at night, and to-day and yesterday many snowstorms. The ilexes and orange trees in the garden are covered with snow and all the flower-beds buried. This little villa was let to Lady Erroll a little time ago (the young Lady Erroll), so you can hear all about it from her. It is rather isolated and quite away from tourists and smart people, so that I can try and cure my infirmities unmolested and unnoticed by the odious newspaper reporters who haunt the hotels at the Riviera.

Of course, it is not quite easy to organise and get all in order, but we are really very comfortable and the view is *so* beautiful. I am longing to be able to draw and paint again. All the summer I never *touched* a pencil or paint-brush.

But now good-bye, dearest Mary, kind and true friend. This letter is too long already and will bore you, I fear. I am becoming prosy, I feel.

Ever with true and unchanging affection and friendship,

Your old friend,
V.

If you were here, Maggie would no doubt accuse you and me (as on one occasion) of "talking metaphysics together." A most serious accusation!

From Count Seckendorff to M. E. P.

SCHLOSS FRIEDRICHSHOF,
CRONBERG, TAUNUS,
October 16th, 1900.

DEAR LADY PONSONBY,

I knew well that your thoughts would be here all the time and I am sorry that you have not been able to come here during the summer.

Her Majesty has been tolerably well, but did not lead a very quiet life, as Her Majesty had far too many relations and visitors staying in the house.

I know it has been often Her Majesty's wish you should come. It would have given her so much pleasure and comfort. The fatal illness has certainly made a progress and Her Majesty has had to go through a very bad attack, which lasted quite three weeks—very great pain and dangerous weakness of the heart. Her Majesty has been in real danger on the 9th October, which has

started all the bad news and the coming of her children.

Since the 10th of October, Her Majesty is getting better every day, though slowly. Her Majesty is able to take food again and the pain is much less. But may we hope for better days to come? We must be thankful for what the condition is at present, and Her Majesty must be given, with perfect quietude, the chance of picking up again.

We had made plans and preparations for a winter stay at Château Malet on the Riviera, but at present we live only *au jour le jour.*

Poor Empress! It is too sad to think her life could not be spared for many years of doing good and for the blessing of so many people.

I shall write again as soon as I see a real change for the better, but an attack like this last one must not renew itself.

Believe me, dear Lady Ponsonby,
Very sincerely yours,
G. Seckendorff.

M. E. P. was able to pay a visit to the Empress Frederick a few months before she died.

From Mademoiselle Perponcher to M. E. P.

Schloss Friedrichshof,
Cronberg, Taunus,
April 9th, 1901.

My dear Lady Ponsonby,

Thank you so much for your kind letter. I have given your message to the Empress and

Her Majesty sends you her very best love and desires me to thank you very warmly for all your kind words and sympathy. Her Majesty also bids me say that she feels very ill and wretched—she says the pains have increased in violence and intensity since you were here and the sufferable hours get fewer every day. If you ask me, I do not think there is a difference since you left, but naturally the nerves give in every day more, and with them the strength to endure the pain. Poor, poor Empress!—never there has been a tragedy like this, I believe. Let us hope that it will not last too long.

To-morrow we expect your Queen here—coming from Kopenhagen and accompanied by Charlotte Knollys and Mr. Greville. I trust and hope it will be a very nice change for the Empress, if Princess Victoria will kindly allow the Empress to see the Queen as much as she likes.

We have very fine Spring days at last, and I am very sorry you did not see Friedrichshof in a better season, but glad to hear that your rheumatism did not get worse and that you arrived safely at last after all the difficulties.

I felt quite ashamed at all your kind words in both your dear letters. If it was on anybody's side to be grateful for so nice a visit it was on ours, and we all feel we have not done half enough for you. I only hope you have taken the feeling with you that you have left real friends behind.

The Reischachs are back since Sunday morning and have asked me to convey to you many kind messages. May I also ask you to give my sincerest

love to Maggie and to tell her that I miss her and the nice talks I had with her more than I can say.

Have you played bridge already ?

Believe me, dear Lady Ponsonby,

Yours very affectionately,

MARGARETHE PERPONCHER.

CHAPTER IX

EPILOGUE

Lady Ponsonby died at Ascot on October 16th, 1916, and the following appreciation of her character by Mr. Arthur Benson appeared shortly afterwards in the "Times."

The death of Lady Ponsonby is a loss which will be deeply felt by a large circle of intimate friends. She was a woman with a mind of great vigour and originality, keenly critical and discriminating, and with a singularly impressive personality. Her range of reading was wide, and she had a close acquaintance with French literature in particular. But she never approached a subject in a submissive spirit, or with a vague intention of acquiring information—and still less with mere desire of stimulating her emotions. Her knowledge was distinct and carefully planned; a book fell into its place, and was scrutinised critically and subtly. Yet she had a generous power of appreciation, and her favourite authors were constantly read and keenly enjoyed. The result of all this was a real richness and suggestiveness of mind, so that her talk was apt, liberal, full of quick allusiveness, and peculiarly refreshing from its penetrating quality. She often used a French word in conversation, to obtain a precise *nuance*, and would humorously lament that this came so naturally to her, because, in her experience,

LADY PONSONBY AT ASCOT, ABOUT 1914.

people were so afraid of what they timidly believed to be culture!

Lady Ponsonby always put life first, and thought of culture as a thing which must enrich and not encumber. Her love of books and her knowledge of them were regarded by her simply as giving her the opportunity of coming into contact with other minds. As wife of Queen Victoria's private secretary, and herself a trusted friend of the Queen's, she had the opportunity of meeting and knowing all the most interesting and influential personages of the day. She was extremely interested in character and temperament, and had a deep appreciation of all that was typical and personal and humorous. She enjoyed any point of view that was sincere, original, or expressive, and critical as she was, she was both tolerant and generous, disliked to over-awe or to bewilder, and was always accessible to anyone who was natural and unaffected. At the same time her quick understanding, her love of vividness and fineness, her enigmatic glance, her great distinction of manner and utterance, and her incisive wit could be disconcerting. She had a great dislike of pose, never talked for effect, was markedly frank and kindly, and was patient of everything except pretentiousness and tediousness. The result was that her conversation was extraordinarily stimulating, because it put her companions on their mettle, while no one was ever less intent upon shining, or more instantly appreciative of anything amusing and interesting.

Lady Ponsonby believed greatly in occupation. She was sociable, but not in the least dependent on society. Few people can ever have been able to amuse themselves so constantly, and with such freshness, in solitude. She enjoyed seclusion as

much as she enjoyed company. Books, handicraft, gardening, all had their charm. She was fond of little devices, and her table was always arranged so as to enable her to take up any pursuit for which she was inclined. She was never listless or fatigued or melancholy. She looked upon life with a cheerful and philosophical spirit, and did not openly indulge herself in retrospect or regret or resignation; she lived with zest and spirit, and the day was seldom long enough for all she had to do.

With all this, she had great sympathy, a large and tender heart, a singular capacity for evoking admiration and affection, and she was the most loyal and faithful of friends. She neither forgot her friends, nor did she ever yield to the temptation of thinking that they had forgotten her; and thus she could always take up the threads of a friendship where she had laid them down. She had a big and liberal nature, entirely free from any petty faults; she had no touch of meanness or resentfulness or morbidity; it was all on a large and fine scale. She had a strong sense of duty, and no one ever fulfilled the obligations of family life and social ties with more constancy and generosity. No one who ever knew her can fail to feel the better for having had the privilege of association with so free and gracious a mind and heart. Infirm though she was of late, she was always fresh and youthful in spirit, while her sympathy and understanding were of a kind which overleaps all incidental barriers; and thus it was that she was so much loved by friends of all ages, by whom she will be both greatly missed and long lamented.

INDEX

Abdul Aziz, Sultan of Turkey, deposed, 124
Abercorn, Marchioness of, 24
Abercorn, Marquess of, 19, 20
Abergeldie, 39
Abinger, Lord, 49
Adam, Paul, 212
Ady, Mrs. (formerly Julia Cartwright), 208
Afghanistan, policy in, 144
Africa, South, war, 284–286
Agriculturists, result of a strike, 71
Alabama incident, xii, 45
Albert, Miss, 127
Alexander II, Emperor of Russia, assassinated, 160
Alexander III, Emperor of Russia, coronation, 166
Alice, H.R.H. Princess, 17, 126
Alphonso XII, King of Spain, wedding, 151
America, relations with England, 45, 53
Ampthill, 1st Lord [*see also* Russell, Lord O.], memorial to, 276
Andrieux, M., policy, 125
Angeli, the portrait painter, 135
Anglo-Saxon, the, 48
Antrim, Earl of, marriage, 87
Antrim, Louisa, Countess of, marriage, 87
Archer, Miss, 242
Arctic expedition, 130
Arnold, Matthew, 212
Arthur, H.R.H. Prince. *See* Connaught
Ascot, xvii, 195
Atholl, Duchess of, 48, 62
Austria, relations with Roumania, 158
Avery, Mr., 175
Aynesworth, Allan, 206
Ayrton, Mr., controversy with Sir J. Hooker, 72

Balfour, Rt. Hon. A. J. (afterwards Earl of), visit to Düsseldorf, 105–120; appearance, 105; character, 108; views on spiritualist séances, 111, 116
Balfour, Gerald, 112
Balmoral Castle, 39, 64
Bar, admission of women to the, 239
Baraguay d'Hilliers, Marshal Louis, 36
Baring, Edward, 80, 121, 140
Baring, Evelyn (afterwards Earl of Cromer), 193
Baring, Francis, 54
Baring, Hon. Maurice, letter from, 205–207; *Black Prince*, 211
Barker, Granville, *Waste*, 223
Barrie, Sir J. M., *Margaret Ogilvie*, 222
Barrington, Lady Caroline, Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria, x, 9
Bassano, Duchesse de, 22
Bathurst, Earl and Countess, 134
Battle, 154
Beatrice, H.R.H. Princess, 135
Beaumont, Lady Margaret, 179

Bedford, Duke of, ix
Bedoyère, Mme. de la, 22, 36
Beesley, Mr., 10
Belgium, 122
Benson, Dr. A. C., Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, xv; opinion of Sir H. and Lady Ponsonby, xvi; correspondence with her, 195, 209; *The Schoolmaster*, 213; urged to accept the Headmastership of Eton, 214–218; epilogue on Lady Ponsonby, 292–294
Bergmann, Dr., 273
Bernsdorff, Count, 63
Bessborough, Earl of, 44
Biddulph, Sir Thomas, Keeper of the Privy Purse, xvi, 12, 47, 64, 81; death, xvi
Bismarck, Count Herbert, 271
Bismarck, Prince, 110; policy, 122, 165; saying of, 257; result of his policy against England, 286; death, 289
Black Rod, appointment of, 133
Bodichon, Mme., 123
Bonaparte, Prince Jerome, 22
Bonaparte, Princess Mathilde, 22
Bonham Carter, Alfred, 180
Boston, 54
Boswell, James, Life of Dr. Johnson, 218
Boucherett, Miss, 79
Boulogne, 20
Breadalbane, Marquess of, 19
Bretagne, the, 37
Brett, R. (afterwards Viscount Esher), 193
Brewer, Dr., *Guide to Science*, xiii
Brewster, Mr., *The Prison*, 231
Bright, John, 162
Browning, Oscar, lectures, 176
Bruce, Lady Augusta, 39
Bruce, General, 47
Bruce, Louisa, 141
Bruce, Robert, 127
Bruhl, Comtesse, 11, 43
Buchanan, Sir George, 205
Buckingham Palace, 12
Bulgaria, atrocities, 127; number of Russians in, 158
Bulgaria, Prince Alexander of, 168, 255; review at Schumla, 158
Buller, General Sir Redvers, 208
Bulteel, Lady Elizabeth, vii, 45
Bulteel, Emily (afterwards Lady Revelstoke), 11
Bulteel, Georgy (afterwards Mrs. Mildmay), 11
Bulteel, John Crocker, vii; death, viii
Bulteel, Mary Elizabeth (afterwards Lady Ponsonby), birth, vii; parents, vii; knowledge of French literature, viii; love of music, viii; friendship with Mrs. P. Craven, ix; with Sir W. Harcourt, ix; religious views, x; appointed Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria, x, 1, 11; characteristics, xi, 7; friendship with the Empress Frederick, xi; marriage, xii, 44; affection for Queen Victoria, 1; opinion of Prince Consort, 2–6; at Osborne, 6, 14, 33; visit to Ireland, 9; at Windsor, 9; rooms in Buckingham Palace, 13; first dinner with Queen Victoria, 14; singing, 16, 18; on board the *Victoria and Albert*, 19; in Paris, 21–26; advice from Lady Canning on wishing to join an Anglican Religious Community, 27–33; at Cherbourg, 35; Abergeldie, 39; Coburg, 40–43. [*See also* Ponsonby, M. E.]
Burmah, work of missionaries in, 30
Burne, Sir Owen, 144
Butler, Mrs. (formerly Fanny Kemble), 91; anecdotes of, 56
Butler, Mrs. (afterwards Lady), price of her pictures for Queen Victoria, 148–150

Byng, Hon. George, 121, 143
Byron, Lord, 10, 12

Cadogan, Fred, 162
Calcraft, Mr., 87
Canada, 45, 48
Canning, Lady, xiv, 8; advice to Mary Bulteel on her wish to join an Anglican Religious Community, 27–33; characteristics, 62
Capital and labour, views on, 67
Cardwell, Mr., 9
Carpet weavers, at Kidderminster, case of, 79
Cartwright, Julia (afterwards Mrs. Ady), 208
Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. J., policy, 77; opinion of Gambetta, 161; criticism on his speech, 169
Champlain, Lake, 56
Chapman, Colonel, 37
Charlemont, Lord, 9
Chauvet, M., on the intolerance of Roman Catholics, 229
Cherbourg, 35
Chesterton, G. K., *Types*, 212
Cholmondeley, Mary, letters from, 219–225; *Prisoners*, 219, 221; *Red Pottage*, 220; criticism on the play *Waste*, 223
Christian, H.R.H. Prince, 64, 81
Churchill, Lady, 19; in Paris, 21; Coburg, 41
Clanricarde, Marchioness of, 62
Clanricarde, Marquess of, 53
Clarendon, Earl of, 19, 20, 22, 26
Clark, Sir John and Lady, at Balmoral, 143
Clothilde, Princesse, 142
Coburg, 40; the Chapel, 42
Coburg, Duchess of, death, 40; funeral, 43, 44
Cologne, 112
Connaught, H.R.H., Duke of, 9, 164
Connor, Dean, death, 164
Consort, H.R.H. Prince, xii; characteristics, 2–6; conduct to women, 3; treatment of his household, 5
Constantinople, proposed conference at, 130
Cork, Countess of, work on the Queen's Jubilee present, 178–182
Cornish, F. W., Vice-Provost of Eton, xv
Courtney, W. L., article on Pascal, 195
Cowley, Countess, 26, 36
Cowley, Earl, Ambassador in Paris, 26
Cowper, Henry, 142
Craven, Rev. Dacre, 256
Craven, Mrs., 80, 91
Craven, Mrs. Pauline (formerly P. de la Ferronaye), friendship with Mary Bulteel, ix
Crealock, General, 153
Crystal Palace Concerts, 113, 117

Daily News, the, on the Eastern question, 139
Davies, Miss Emily, xiv
Derby, Earl of, 162; on the proposed conference at Constantinople, 130; despatch to Turkey, 136; relations with Disraeli, 137
Dilke, Sir Charles, 162
Diplomatic Service, opinion of, 205–207, 235–238
Disraeli, Rt. Hon. Benjamin, xiv; criticism on, 134; influence on Queen Victoria, 137; policy, 145
Drawing Society, in Windsor, exhibition, 84
Dreyfus case, 282
Dudley, Earl and Countess of, 80
Dufferin and Ava, Marq. of, 145
Duncan, Mr., 55
Dundas, Sir David, 90
Dunmore, Earl of, 49
Düsseldorf, 105, 107, 118

Eastern Question, 130–141, 246, 250, 267
Edinburgh, H.R.H. Prince Alfred, Duke of, 80
Edinburgh, H.R.H. Duchess of, 80
Elfin, the, 58
Elgin, Countess of, 141
Elgin, Earl of, Viceroy of India, 70
Eliot, George, xiv; impressions of, 89–92; correspondence with M. Ponsonby, 93–104; "Stradivarius," 102
Eliott, C., 80
Elliot, Sir Francis, on the proposed conference at Constantinople, 130
Ellis, Arthur, 150
Ellison, Mrs., 77
Elvey, Sir George, 87
Elwin, Whitwell, life of, 212
Ely, Marchioness of, 16; criticism on, 19, 33; in Paris, 21; story of, 136
England, relations with America, 45, 53; with Germany, 271
Erewegh, the courier, 106
Erling, Princesse d', 36
Erroll, Countess of, 124, 287
Eton, Headmastership of, 215
Eugénie, Empress, appearance, 24, 25

Fane, Hon. Julian, 90
Fenians, plot, 60
Ferronaye, Pauline de la (afterwards Mrs. P. Craven), ix
Fildes, Luke, studio, 249
Fitzroy, Lord C., 10
Flete, viii
Flower, Mr., 178
Forbes, Mr., 87
Forster, Rt. Hon. W. E., Education Bill, 77
Fortescue, Mrs., 40
Fortnightly Review, the, 147
Frederick William, Crown Prince of Prussia (afterwards Emperor of Germany), marriage, 241; illness, 241, 258, 268; at San Remo, 260; death, 270
Frederick, Empress of Germany, friendship with Mary Bulteel, xi; at Coburg, 42; popularity, 106; letters to Lady Ponsonby, 165, 243–260, 265–288; policy, 168; qualities, 171; love of reading, 231; illness, 238, 282, 287, 290; love for England, 241; characteristics, 242, 243; impressions of Gladstone, 243, 247, 252; on the relations between England and Germany, 244, 271; the policy of England, 246–250; in Venice, 249, 257; on the Eastern question, 250, 267; religious views, 253; on the policy in Ireland, 253; admiration for Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, 255; unpopularity, 258–260; at San Remo, 260; unfair treatment by the Press, 264; grief at the illness of her husband, 264, 269; on his death, 270, 274; the treatment of the Doctors, 273; loneliness, 274, 280; love for Italy, 278; relations with her son, 280; at The Marigola, 283; on the South African war, 284–286
Friedrichshof, 281, 290
Frogmore, 80
Furchtenstein, Count, 41, 43

Gambetta, Léon, 161
Gerhardt, Dr., 273
German-Austrian Treaty of Alliance, 266
Germany, state of intrigue, 165; prejudices against England, 244; relations with, 271; hostility to, 286
Gibbs, Mr., 10
Gilmuire, Ascot, 195
Girginti, Princess of, 152

Girton College, xiv, 123
Gladstone, Catherine, letter to Queen Victoria, 177, 178
Gladstone, Helen, 178
Gladstone, Herbert (afterwards Viscount), 178
Gladstone, Mary, visit to Düsseldorf, 105–120; character, 110, 115
Gladstone, Miss, at Cologne, 112
Gladstone, Rt. Hon. W. E., xiv; speech at King's College, 72; criticism on, 121, 170, 177, 243, 247, 252; policy in Turkey, 126; letter to Negroponte, 139; Home Rule policy, 172, 254; death, 235
Goldschmidt, Otto, 110, 111, 115
Gordon, General, death, 170; despatches, 193; character, 194
Gordon, Lady, 80
Gortschakoff, Count, policy, 125
Goschen, Viscount, 162; at Balmoral, 65
Gosford, Earl of, 87
Gosse, Sir Edmund, letter from, 207
Gosselin, Mr., visit to Düsseldorf, 105; appearance, 105, 107, 108
Gower, Lord Ronald, letter from Lady Ponsonby, 163
Graham, Colonel, advance on Teb, 193
Granville, Countess, 90
Granville, Earl, 5, 90, 193; letter from, 133
Green, Miss, 274
Greene, Plunket, viii
Greville, Mr., 290
Grey, Albert (afterwards 4th Earl), 150; letter from, 172–175
Grey, Charles, 2nd Earl, Reform Bill, vii
Grey, General Hon. Charles, private secretary to Queen Victoria, x; death, xii, 45
Grey, Lady Elizabeth (afterwards Lady E. Bulteel), vii
Grey, Henry, 3rd Earl, 13; opinion of Gladstone, 121
Grisi, viii
Grosvenor, Thomas, 132
Grove, Sir George, at Düsseldorf, 110, 113; riddle, 114

Halifax, Viscount, 66
Halifax, Viscountess, 11
Hamerton, P. G., *Painters' Camp*, 60
Hamilton, Sir William, theory of perception, 49
Harcourt, Rt. Hon. Sir William, 90, 162; opinion of Mary Bulteel, ix; letter from, 155; policy, 156, 174
Hartington, Marq. of, 162; policy, 174
Hatzfeldt, Count, 272
Hawarden, 177; library, 178
Higgins, Mrs., 52
Higginson, General Sir G., 153
Hobart Pacha, 135
Hohenzollern, Prince and Princess, 114
Holland, Lady, illness, 160
Holland, Sydney (afterwards Lord Knutsford), letter from Lady Ponsonby, 201
Holmes, Mr., 73, 77
Hood, Colonel, 12
Hooker, Sir J. D., controversy with Ayrton, 72
Hornby, Dr., Headmaster of Eton, 176
Howard, George (afterwards 9th Earl of Carlisle), 89
Hudson Bay Fur Co., 50
Humanity, religion of, 75
Huxley, Prof., 98; on Hylo-idealism, 182
Hylo-idealism, 182

Indians, homage to Queen Victoria, 163

Ireland, 101, 173; administration of, 253
Isabella, Queen, 152, 153

Jameson Raid, 284
Jenner, Sir William, 65
Joachim, Herr, 109, 119
Joachim, Mme., singing, 110, 114, 119
Jocelyn, Lady, xiv, 8, 48, 134
Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 218
Journel, Mme. de, 36
Jowett, Prof., 103; definition of religion, 230
Juarez, President of Mexico, 63 n.

Kemble, Adelaide (afterwards Mrs. Sartoris), viii, 91
Kemble, Fanny (afterwards Mrs. Butler), 56, 200
Kent, H.R.H. Duchess of, 9, 39
Kerr, Miss, 9, 12
Khartoum campaign, 171
Kidderminster carpet weavers, case of, 79
Knollys, Hon. Charlotte, 290
Koch, Prof., discovery, 276
Kotzonbey, Princess, 166
Krause, Dr., 264

Landseer, Sir Edwin, at Osborne, 59
Lansdowne, Marchioness of, 87
Lascelles, B., 106
Lascelles, Miss, 124
Layard, Sir Henry, 137
Lee, Sir Henry Austin, 206
Lee, Vernon, literary gift, 183; letter from Lady Ponsonby, 184–186; books, 186
Lees, Dr., 127
Lees, Florence, 256
Leigh, William Austen, visit to Düsseldorf, 105; appearance, 105
Leighton, Sir Frederick, xvi
Leiningen, Prince, 9
Lellon, Miss, 28
Leopold, H.R.H. Prince, 127
Lewes, George, 89
Lewes, M. E., 90, *see* Eliot
Lewin, Dr., 182
Lichtenstein, Princess, 148
Liddon, Canon, xv, 164
Lind, Jenny, 110
Logsdail, Mr., 249
Louise, H.R.H. Princess, 63, 64
Lyttelton, Lady, 177
Lyttelton, Hon. Spencer, visit to Düsseldorf, 105; appearance, 106; way of talking, 109, 116; treatment of a German waiter, 119
Lytton, Earl of, 137

Macdonald, Lady, 8
Mackenzie, Sir Morell, attends the Emperor Frederick, 258; unpopularity, 273
Maclean, Dr., opinion of Lady Canning, 62
Magnum, Baron, at Osborne, 63
Magruda, Miss, 50
Maine, Sir Henry, 143
Malet, Sir E., 272
Mallock, W. H., article in the *Nineteenth Century*, 100
Malmesbury, Earl of, 38
Manchester, Duchess of, 87
Marie, Empress of Russia, coronation, 166
Mario, viii
Marshall, Fred, 154
Martin, Sir Theodore, 208
Maude, Colonel, 80
Mauley, Baron de, 90
Maximilian, Archduke, assassinated, 63 n.
Melgund, Lady, 90
Mentmore, 154
Mickley, Colonel, 12
Mignet, F. A. A., *History of Marie Stuart*, 239
Mildmay, Mrs., 79
Mill, John Stuart, xviii; religious opinions, 75
Montreal, 49
Morgan, Captain, 205

Morier, Sir Robert, 257; criticism on, 171
Morley, Viscount, 239, 251
Mount Edgcumbe, Countess of, Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria, 8; at Osborne, 14, 34
Mount Edgcumbe, Earl of, 87
Mourne Mountains, 101
Murad, Sultan of Turkey, 124
Murray, Miss, 9

Naden, Miss, essays, 182
Napier, Lord, of Magdala, Governor of Gibraltar, 151; at the wedding of King Alphonso XII, 151
Napoleon III, Emperor, receives Queen Victoria, 21, 35; character, 26; appearance, 38; taken prisoner, 66
Napoleon, Prince, 142
National Gallery, 129
Neilson, Julia, 206
Neruda, Mme., 81
Netley Hospital, 62
New Republic, the, 100, 102
New York, impressions of, 54
Newfoundland, 48
Newman, Cardinal, theory of spiritual development, 240
Niagara Falls, 51
Nietzsche, manifesto against democracy, 239
Nightingale, Florence, 31
Nineteenth Century, the, 213
Norman Tower, Windsor Castle, x, xiii, 45, 67; Moat Garden, xiii; prison rooms, 73, 78
Nos Intimes, play, 56
Nouvelle Revue, the, 158
Nuneham, ix, 90

Osborne, 6, 33, 59
Ottawa, 50

Paget, Lord Alfred, 19
Paget, Miss, 183, *see* Lee
Pakington, Sir John, 36
Palmerston, Viscount, 26, 90
Palmerston, Viscountess, 90
Paris, 21
Parnell, Charles S., policy, 172–175
Parnellism, 172, 173
Pascal, B., opinion of, xvii; essay on, 195, 212, 213
Paulet, Lord Frank, 52
Pearson, Canon Hugh, xv, 141
Peile, Mr., Chairman of the Committee on the Queen's Jubilee present, 180–182, 201
Pelissier, Marshal, 39
Pelly, Sir L., 144
Perpignan, Mdlle. de, 168
Perponcher, Margarethe, letter to Lady Ponsonby, 289–291
Peshawar Conference, 144
Phipps, Colonel, 9
Piggott, Thomas, Abbot of Chertsey, discovery of the inscription to, 74
Pitt, Miss, 143
Ponsonby, Arthur, letters from his mother, 226–235, 238–240; attaché at Constantinople, 233
Ponsonby, Emily, Lady, 44
Ponsonby, Sir Frederick, 44
Ponsonby, General Sir Henry Frederick, Equerry to Prince Consort, xii, 44; marriage, xii, 44; in Canada, xii, 45; private secretary to Queen Victoria, xiii, 45, 58; characteristics, xvi, 192; Keeper of the Privy Purse, xvi, 45; death, xvii, 186; career, 44; on the death of Prince Consort, 46; singing, 50; letter from, 51–53; in New York, 55; at Balmoral, 124; on the Eastern question, 124, 134–136; the Bulgarian atrocities, 126; political sermon from his wife, 128; method of work, 190–192; sense of humour, 190; self-effacement, 192; tact, 232; letter from the Empress Frederick, 271.

Ponsonby, Magdalen, in San Remo, 260; at the wedding of Princess Victoria, 275.
Ponsonby, Mary Elizabeth, in Canada, xii, 48–53; return to Windsor, xii, 58, 67; education of her children, xiii; political views, xiv, 69; friends, xiv, xv; work for the cause of women, xiv, 150; characteristics, xvi; religious views, xvii, 83–86, 175, 227–231; death of her husband, xvii, 186; at Ascot, xvii, 195; varied interests, xvii, xviii; at Montreal, 49; sleighing parties, 49; in New York, 53–56; visit to Osborne, 58–64; Balmoral, 64; views on capital and labour, 67; the Kidderminster carpet weavers, 79; dinner party at Frogmore, 80; impressions of George Eliot, 89–92; correspondence with her, 93–104; in Ireland, 101; chaperones a party to Düsseldorf, 105–120; at Cologne, 112; impressions of Girton College, 123; on the Eastern question, 125, 130–132, 136–138; rooms in Buckingham Palace, 128; political sermon to her husband, 129; at Mme. Tussaud's, 132; criticism on Queen Victoria, 137; at Tollymore, 139; meeting with Renan, 142; at the theatre, 149, 150; criticism on Gladstone, 170; attends the service at St. George's, 175; at Hawarden, 177; on the Queen's Jubilee present, 178–182, 201–204; impressions of E. Smyth, 184–186; memorandum on her husband, 189–193; correspondence with A. C. Benson, 195, 209; article on Pascal, 195, 209, 212, 213; urges A. C. Benson to accept the Headmastership of Eton, 214–218; letters to her son Arthur, 226–235, 238–240; dislike of Lord Salisbury's policy, 234; memorandum on the diplomatic profession, 235–238; at Cronberg, 238; on the character of the Empress Frederick, 241–243; letters from her, 243–260; at San Remo, 260–265, 277; at Friedrichshof, 289; death, 292; epilogue on, 292–294
Porth, Miss Jane, 127
Positivist School, 212
Primrose, Hon. Everard, in Vienna, 147, 159; description of society, 147, 159; at Madrid, 150; Mentmore, 153; Kronstadt, 156; tour through Transylvania, 156; at the coronation of the Emperor of Russia, 166
Protestantism, principles, 229
Prussia, Prince Henry of, in San Remo, 260; at Hong Kong, 281
Prussia, Princess Victoria of, 168; marriage, 275
Pumpenheim, 281

Quarterly Review, the, 207, 223
Queen's Jubilee Nursing Institute, 178, 201–204

Rabe, von, in San Remo, 260
Radolinski, Count, 165; criticism on the Empress Frederick 258; character, 265
Rathbone, Mr., 180
Rawlinson, Sir Henry, 138
Reform Bill of 1832, vii
Renan, E., appearance, 142
Road to Ruin, The, 56
Robinson, Mr., 56
Roche, M., viii
Rocheblave, Mdlle., 50

Roden, Earl of, 150; ordered to Mentone, 151
Roebuck, Mrs., 53
Roggenbach, Baron, 261
Rome, Church of, principles, 229
Ros, Olivia de (afterwards Lady Cowley), 26
Rosenau, 43
Roumania, relations with Austria, 158
Roumania, Prince Charles of, 158
Rourke, Mr., 83
Rousseau, J. J., *Emile*, 61
Royal, H.R.H. Princess (afterwards Empress Frederick), 20, 24; marriage, 241
Russell, George, 73
Russell, Hatty, 90
Russell, Lord Odo (afterwards Lord Ampthill), 90, 106; knowledge of foreign policy, 233
Russell, Rachel, 13
Russell, Lord William, 91
Russia, advance on Herat, 247
Russia, Grand Duke Constantine of, 158
Russia, Grandduchess Constantine, 166
Russians, atrocities, 135; number in Bulgaria, 158

St. George's Chapel, Windsor, service, 175
St. James's Hall, "Monday Pops," viii
St. Lawrence river, 49
Saldini, singing, 83
Salisbury, Marchioness of, 179
Salisbury, Marquess of, political views, 69; policy, 131, 144, 169, 170, 234; attacks on, 281
San Remo, 260
Sand, George, 94
Sanderson, Sir Thomas, 193
Saratoga, 57
Sardou, V., *Andrea*, 86
Sartoris, Mrs. (formerly Adelaide Kemble), viii, 91
Saturday Review, the, 169
Saulcy, Mme. de, 22
Schaumburg-Lippe, Prince Adolphe of, marriage, 275
Schumacher, Herr, 110
Seabrook, Mr., 73
Seckendorff, Count, 165, 168, 171; in San Remo, 260; on the Empress Frederick's illness, 288
Seymour, Colonel, Master of the Household, 10
Sheffield, Lord, 155
Sheriff, Miss, 79
Sidgwick, Prof. Henry, 97, 112
Simeon, Sir John, 63
Sinaia, 157
Sleighing parties, 49
Smythe, Miss Ethel (afterwards Dame), friendship with Mary Bulteel, viii; impressions of, 184–186
Soudan expedition, 170
Spain, fêtes in, 151
Spelling Bee, 83
Spencer, Herbert, xvii, 89
Spencer, Lady, work on the Queen's Jubilee present, 178–182
Spender, J. A., *Comments of Bagshot*, 225
Spiritualist séances, views on, 111, 116
Standish, Mr. and Mrs., 80
Stanley, Dean, xv
Stanley, Lady, 142
Stanley, Lord, 63
Stanley, Hon. Lyulph (afterwards Lord Sheffield), 155
Stockmar, Baron, 6; appearance, 6, 12; bad health, 15
Strafford, Alice, 179
Sturgis, Howard, 219
Sutherland, Duke of, 163
Sydney, Lord, portrait, 135

Table turning, 17
Teb, advance on, 193

Temple, Dr., Bishop of London, 256
Thiers, M., manifesto, 139
Thirlwall, Bishop, story of, 103
Times, the, on the Eastern question, 139
Titles Bill, 128
Tollymore, 139
Tolstoi, L., *Anna Karenina*, 197; criticism on, 212
Trade Union for women, the first, xv
Transylvania, tour through, 156
Turkey, note from the Five Powers, 124; Bulgarian atrocities, 127
Tussaud's, Mme., 132

Valsh, Le Vicomte, 22
Venice, 249, 257
Versailles, La Galérie des Glaces, ball at, 25
Victoria, H.M. Queen, x; appoints Mary Bulteel Maid of Honour, x, 1, 11; character, xi, 2; reception in Ireland, 9; at Osborne, 14, 58–64; singing, 18; visit to Paris, 18–26; friendship with Napoleon, iii, 26; at Cherbourg, 35–39; grief at the death of the Prince Consort, 47; at Balmoral, 64; influence for peace, 110; Empress of India, 128; on the Eastern question, 129; criticism on, 137; prerogative, 145; reception of the Indian troops, 163; letter to Lady Ponsonby, 177; on the policy of Gladstone, 177; Jubilee present, 178–182; sympathy on the death of Sir H. Ponsonby, 186–189; article on, 207, 223; visit to Germany, 269; at Grasse, 279
Vienna, 147, 159

Waldegrave, Countess of, ix, 91
Wales, H.R.H. Albert Edward, Prince of (afterwards King Edward VII), 162; in Ireland, 9; illness, 68; visit to India, 82
Walewska, Mme., 36
Wallace, Sir William, 127
Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 252
Warre, Dr., 210
Wayte, Mrs., 77
Webb, Sidney, articles on Socialism, 231
Wellesley, Lily [Mrs. Gerald], 78
West Point, 57
West, Richard, 90
Whippingham Church, 63
Wickham, Mr. and Mrs., 178
Wilberforce, Rt. Rev. Samuel, Bishop of Oxford, x
Wilde, Colonel, 15
William II, German ex-Emperor, 42, 271; treatment of his mother, 272, 280; reception in Windsor, 286
Woburn, ix, 90
Wolseley, Lord, 170
Women, Employment of, committee on, 79, 150
Wood, Charles, 164
Woods, Mr., 249
Wright, Mr., 123

Zimmer, Miss, 149